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Anticipatory Grief Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Situations Triggering Anticipatory Grief

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4 · Coping with Fear and Anxiety

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Situations Triggering Anticipatory Grief

Anticipatory grief can be an overwhelming experience as you prepare for an expected loss, whether it's a loved one's declining health or another significant life change.

1. What specific situations or events have triggered feelings of anticipatory grief for you? (e.g., a loved one's diagnosis, the progression of an illness, conversations about end-of-life care)

2. How do these situations impact your emotions? (e.g., sadness, anxiety, fear, helplessness)

3. When do you most often experience anticipatory grief? (e.g., during doctor's appointments, when discussing the future, in quiet moments)

4. What are your immediate reactions when faced with situations that trigger anticipatory grief? (e.g., withdrawal, crying, seeking reassurance, anger)

5. What strategies can you use to manage your reactions to anticipatory grief triggers? (e.g., joining a support group, writing about your feelings, setting boundaries around discussions of the future)

6. What self-care practices can you incorporate into your routine to support yourself through anticipatory grief? (e.g., regular exercise, mindfulness meditation, ensuring adequate sleep)

Processing Anger and Frustration

1. What specific situations or thoughts trigger feelings of anger or frustration in you? (e.g., the unfairness of the situation, lack of control, others' responses)

2. How do anger and frustration show up in your daily life? (e.g., irritability, physical tension, withdrawal, outbursts)

3. How has your anger and frustration affected your relationships with others? (e.g., increased conflict, emotional distance, difficulty communicating)

4. What healthy outlets can you use to release anger and frustration? (e.g., physical exercise, creative expression, talking to a friend)

5. What negative thoughts tend to fuel your anger and frustration? (e.g., “This is unfair,” “I can’t take this anymore,” “Why is this happening?”)

6. Choose one negative thought and try to challenge by answering the following questions:

Negative Thought: _____

- What evidence supports this thought?

- What evidence contradicts this thought?

- Is there another way to look at this situation?

- If a friend had this thought, what advice would I give them?

7. How can practicing self-compassion help you manage your anger and frustration? (e.g., being kind to yourself, acknowledging that it's okay to feel angry)

8. How can practicing forgiveness, whether for yourself or others, help you reduce anger and frustration? (e.g., letting go of resentment, accepting the situation, finding peace)

Dealing with Guilt

Guilt is a common emotion during anticipatory grief, often stemming from feelings of responsibility, regret, or perceived shortcomings in how we handle the situation.

1. What specific thoughts, actions, or situations trigger feelings of guilt in you? (e.g., not being able to do more, wishing things were different, perceived mistakes)

2. How do past decisions or actions contribute to your current feelings of guilt? (e.g., decisions about care, moments of impatience, times you were not present)

3. How does guilt manifest in your daily life? (e.g., self-criticism, withdrawal, difficulty enjoying positive moments)

4. What unhelpful or irrational thoughts contribute to your feelings of guilt? (e.g., “I should have known better,” “I could have prevented this”)

5. How can reflecting on the reality of your situation help you challenge feelings of guilt? (e.g., acknowledging what was within your control, recognizing the complexity of the situation)

6. If a friend were in your situation, how would you respond to their feelings of guilt? (e.g., with compassion, understanding, encouragement to be kind to themselves)

7. How can you look back on the choices you made with compassion and understanding? (e.g., recognizing that you made the best decisions you could at the time, understanding the constraints you were under)

Coping with Fear and Anxiety

Fear and anxiety are common emotions during anticipatory grief, often arising from uncertainty about the future, concerns about loss, and the overwhelming nature of impending change. These feelings can be intense and may interfere with your daily life.

1. What specific situations or thoughts trigger feelings of fear and anxiety in you? (e.g., thoughts of losing a loved one, uncertainty about the future, witnessing a loved one's decline)

2. How does uncertainty about the future contribute to your feelings of fear and anxiety? (e.g., not knowing what to expect, fear of being unprepared)

3. How do fear and anxiety show up in your daily life? (e.g., physical symptoms like tension, difficulty concentrating, avoidance behaviors)

4. What unhelpful or irrational thoughts contribute to your feelings of fear and anxiety? (e.g., “I can’t handle this,” “Something terrible will happen,” “I’m not strong enough”)

5. How can reflecting on the reality of your situation help you challenge feelings of fear and anxiety? (e.g., acknowledging what is within your control, recognizing that worst-case scenarios are unlikely)

6. What coping strategies have helped you manage fear and anxiety in the past? (e.g., deep breathing, talking to a friend, engaging in hobbies)

7. What new strategies could you try to manage your fear and anxiety? (e.g., grounding exercises, setting small, manageable goals)

Expressing Sadness and Sorrow

1. What specific thoughts, events, or situations trigger feelings of sadness and sorrow in you? (e.g., thoughts of saying goodbye, witnessing a loved one's decline, memories of better times)

2. What healthy outlets can you use to express your sadness and sorrow? (e.g., journaling, talking to a trusted friend, engaging in creative activities)

3. How can creative activities help you express and process sadness and sorrow? (e.g., painting, writing poetry, playing music)

4. What strategies have helped you manage sadness and sorrow in the past? (e.g., spending time in nature, practicing mindfulness, seeking comfort in rituals)

Healthy Coping Mechanisms

1. What coping mechanisms are you currently using to manage your anticipatory grief? (e.g., distraction, talking to friends, journaling)

2. How do your current coping mechanisms affect your emotional, mental, and physical well-being? (e.g., reducing anxiety, providing comfort, leading to emotional suppression)

3. Are there any coping mechanisms you'd like to change, improve, or add to your current approach? (e.g., incorporating mindfulness, reducing reliance on certain behaviors)

4. What physical activities can help you manage the stress and emotional burden of anticipatory grief? (e.g., exercise, yoga, deep breathing exercises)

5. What emotional coping mechanisms can support you in processing your grief? (e.g., journaling, talking to a therapist, allowing yourself to cry)

6. How can social interactions and support systems help you cope with anticipatory grief? (e.g., spending time with loved ones, joining a support group, talking to friends)

7. What spiritual practices or beliefs can help you find peace and meaning during this time? (e.g., prayer, meditation)

8. How can you incorporate these coping mechanisms into your daily routine? (e.g., setting aside time each morning, creating a bedtime ritual, scheduling regular social interactions)

Planning for the Future Without Your Loved One

Anticipating the loss of a loved one brings with it not only deep emotional pain but also the challenge of envisioning a future without them. Planning for the future during this time can be overwhelming, yet it is a crucial step in preparing yourself emotionally, mentally, and practically.

1. How does thinking about a future without your loved one make you feel? (e.g., anxious, uncertain, sad, conflicted)

2. What aspects of your loved one's presence in your life will you miss the most? (e.g., their support, companionship, daily routines)

3. What challenges do you anticipate facing as you move forward without your loved one? (e.g., loneliness, managing responsibilities, maintaining traditions)

4. What financial or legal matters do you need to consider as you plan for the future without your loved one? (e.g., managing accounts, updating legal documents, handling estate matters)

5. How might your daily routines change after your loved one is gone? (e.g., changes in household tasks, managing alone, adapting to new schedules)

6. What responsibilities will you need to take on that your loved one currently handles? (e.g., financial management, caregiving, household maintenance)

7. What aspects of your loved one's life and values do you want to carry forward in your own life? (e.g., their kindness, commitment to family, passion for certain causes)

8. How can you seek help when you're struggling with the emotional weight of planning for the future? (e.g., reaching out to loved ones, seeking professional counseling, joining a support group)

Understanding Changes in Relationships

1. How has your relationship with your loved one evolved since their illness or condition began? (e.g., changes in roles, communication patterns, emotional closeness)

2. What emotional responses have these changes in your relationship triggered in you? (e.g., sadness, frustration, resentment, fear)

3. What specific factors have contributed to the changes in your relationships? (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, emotional stress, changes in communication)

4. How have you been coping with the emotions triggered by these relationship changes? (e.g., talking to friends, journaling, avoiding the issue)

5. What new strategies could you try to better manage the emotions related to relationship changes? (e.g., seeking counseling, practicing mindfulness, having open conversations)

6. How can you approach a conversation with your loved one about the changes in your relationship? (e.g., expressing your feelings, acknowledging the difficulty of the conversation, seeking mutual understanding)

7. What steps can you take to adapt to the new dynamics in your relationships? (e.g., adjusting expectations, finding new ways to connect, redefining roles)

8. How can you maintain or even strengthen emotional closeness with your loved one despite the changes in your relationship? (e.g., regular check-ins, shared activities, expressing affection)

Communicating with Your Loved One

1. How would you describe your current communication with your loved one? (e.g., open, guarded, tense, supportive)

2. What topics do you typically discuss with your loved one? (e.g., daily activities, memories, future plans, emotions)

3. What challenges do you face when trying to communicate with your loved one? (e.g., fear of upsetting them, difficulty finding the right words, emotional overwhelm)

4. What are the important messages or feelings you want to communicate to your loved one? (e.g., love, gratitude, forgiveness, shared memories)

5. What difficult conversations do you need to have with your loved one? (e.g., discussing their wishes, talking about fears, addressing unresolved issues)

6. How can you initiate difficult conversations with your loved one in a way that feels safe and supportive? (e.g., choosing the right time and place, being gentle, acknowledging the difficulty of the topic)

7. How can you create more opportunities for meaningful communication with your loved one? (e.g., setting aside dedicated time, asking open-ended questions, sharing experiences together)

Saying Goodbye

Saying goodbye involves acknowledging the impending loss, expressing your feelings, and finding ways to make your final moments together meaningful.

1. Why does it feel important for you to say goodbye to your loved one? (e.g., finding closure, expressing love, honoring your relationship)

2. What fears or anxieties do you have about saying goodbye? (e.g., fear of overwhelming emotions, worry about not finding the right words, concern about your loved one's reaction)

3. What are the key messages or feelings you want to communicate to your loved one as you say goodbye? (e.g., love, gratitude, forgiveness, reassurance)

4. When and where do you think would be the best time and setting to say goodbye? (e.g., a quiet moment alone, during a special event, in a comfortable and familiar place)

5. How do you want to express your goodbye to your loved one? (e.g., through words, physical gestures like holding hands, a written letter)

6. How can you incorporate shared memories into your goodbye? (e.g., reminiscing about special moments, sharing a favorite story, looking at photos together)

7. How can you manage your emotions during the goodbye to ensure that you express everything you want to say? (e.g., taking deep breaths, pausing when needed, allowing emotions to flow naturally)

Making Practical Plans

During anticipatory grief, making practical plans can provide a sense of control and preparedness as you navigate the emotional challenges of an impending loss. These plans can range from legal and financial arrangements to decisions about caregiving and end-of-life wishes.

1. What are the key practical needs that you need to address as you prepare for your loved one's passing? (e.g., legal documents, financial arrangements, healthcare decisions)

2. What are your loved one's wishes and preferences regarding their care, end-of-life decisions, and after-death arrangements? (e.g., living will, funeral preferences, organ donation)

3. How do you feel about addressing these practical matters? (e.g., overwhelmed, relieved, anxious)

4. What legal documents do you need to prepare or update as part of your practical planning? (e.g., will, power of attorney, healthcare proxy)

5. What financial arrangements do you need to address? (e.g., managing bank accounts, paying bills, handling insurance)

6. How can you communicate these legal and financial plans to others who need to be involved? (e.g., family members, financial advisors, legal professionals)

7. What healthcare decisions need to be made in advance? (e.g., advance directives, do-not-resuscitate orders, palliative care preferences)

8. What caregiving needs and arrangements need to be considered? (e.g., in-home care, hospice, coordinating with healthcare providers)

9. What are your loved one's end-of-life wishes, and how can you ensure they are honored? (e.g., place of passing, palliative care preferences, spiritual or religious rituals)

10. What emotional support will be needed for both your loved one and yourself during the end-of-life period? (e.g., counseling, support groups, spiritual guidance)

Grieving in the Workplace

Navigating anticipatory grief while maintaining your responsibilities in the workplace can be a daunting challenge. Balancing personal sorrow with professional demands requires self-awareness, communication, and thoughtful strategies.

1. How has anticipatory grief impacted your ability to focus and perform tasks at work? (e.g., difficulty concentrating, decreased productivity, increased errors)

2. How has anticipatory grief influenced your interactions with coworkers? (e.g., withdrawing from social activities, becoming irritable, avoiding conversations)

3. What type of support would help you manage anticipatory grief while maintaining your work responsibilities? (e.g., flexible hours, reduced workload, mental health resources)

4. How can you effectively communicate your situation to your employer or HR department? (e.g., scheduling a private meeting, being honest about your needs, offering potential solutions)

5. How much information do you feel comfortable sharing with your colleagues about your anticipatory grief? (e.g., only sharing with close colleagues, providing a general explanation, keeping details private)

6. What coping strategies can you use to manage your grief while at work? (e.g., taking breaks, practicing mindfulness, seeking support from a colleague)

7. What self-care practices can you integrate into your work routine to support your well-being? (e.g., staying hydrated, eating nutritious meals, setting aside time for relaxation)

8. How can setting boundaries at work help you manage your grief? (e.g., limiting overtime, saying no to extra projects, taking time off when needed)

9. Do you feel that professional support, such as counseling or therapy, would benefit you during this time? (e.g., talking to a therapist, joining a support group, accessing employee assistance programs)

10. Are there colleagues you trust who you can lean on for support? (e.g., sharing your feelings, asking for help with tasks, seeking advice)

11. What resources does your workplace offer that could support you during this time? (e.g., employee assistance programs, mental health days, wellness programs)

Collecting Mementos

As you prepare for the loss of a loved one, collecting mementos can be a meaningful way to preserve their memory and keep a tangible connection to them. Mementos are not just physical objects; they carry emotional significance, representing moments, memories, and the essence of your loved one's life.

1. Why is collecting mementos important to you during this time of anticipatory grief? (e.g., preserving memories, maintaining a connection, honoring their legacy)

2. What types of mementos come to mind when you think about your loved one? (e.g., photographs, personal items, handwritten notes)

3. What items symbolize important memories or experiences you shared with your loved one? (e.g., souvenirs from trips, gifts exchanged, items from special occasions)

4. When do you think it would be most appropriate to start collecting mementos? (e.g., during a calm moment, after a meaningful conversation, at a special event)

5. Would you like to involve other family members or friends in collecting mementos? (e.g., sharing stories, dividing items, creating a collaborative memory project)

6. How do you plan to organize the mementos you collect? (e.g., creating a memory box, making a scrapbook, displaying them in a special place)

7. How do you feel about the process of collecting mementos? (e.g., comforted, overwhelmed, nostalgic, grateful)

8. How can you manage difficult emotions that might arise as you collect mementos? (e.g., Only handle items that feel manageable in the moment, Journal your thoughts, Allow tears, Use grounding techniques)

Maintaining Normalcy

During anticipatory grief, the emotional burden of impending loss can disrupt your daily life, making it challenging to maintain a sense of normalcy. However, finding ways to continue with familiar routines and activities can provide comfort, stability, and a sense of control during this uncertain time.

1. What does maintaining normalcy mean to you during this time of anticipatory grief? (e.g., continuing daily routines, staying connected with friends, keeping up with work or hobbies)

2. How can you balance the need for normalcy with the emotions of anticipatory grief? (e.g., allowing yourself to grieve while engaging in daily tasks, setting aside time for reflection)

3. What daily or weekly routines help you feel grounded and provide a sense of normalcy? (e.g., morning coffee, exercise, family dinners, weekend activities)

4. How do social interactions contribute to your sense of normalcy? (e.g., staying connected with friends, attending social events, keeping up with family traditions)

5. How might your daily routines and activities need to be adapted as your loved one's condition changes? (e.g., adjusting work hours, modifying social plans, finding new ways to stay active)

6. How can you cope with unexpected changes that disrupt your normal routines? (e.g., practicing mindfulness, seeking support, adjusting expectations)

7. How can you work to reestablish a sense of normalcy after a disruption occurs? (e.g., gradually returning to routines, finding new ways to adapt, seeking support)

8. What self-care practices can you integrate into your daily routine to support your well-being? (e.g., taking short breaks, practicing gratitude, engaging in creative activities)

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18, 29, 33. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Anticipatory Grief material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

Document-specific corrections

- Keep Anticipatory Grief explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [2]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Clinically review medical or treatment statements on pages [4, 5, 6, 9]; remove prescriptive medication advice, clarify coordination with licensed medical care, and update contraindications or urgent warning signs for the specific topic.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [2] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use Anticipatory Grief activities as psychoeducation and structured reflection, not diagnosis or a stand-alone treatment plan. Adapt or stop any exercise that worsens distress, functioning, conflict, pain, or dissociation, and escalate care according to the actual presentation.
- Bereavement is not inherently a disorder. Consider prolonged grief disorder only when system-specific requirements, impairment, time course, and cultural, social, and religious context are met.

Crisis and current resources

- For Anticipatory Grief, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. · Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/national-behavioral-health-crisis-care>
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