

Self Help Guidebooks for the *REMEMBER, IT'S OK* Book Series.



Remember, It's OK – GUIDEBOOK THREE:

For The Support Person

(friends, family members, health care providers, funeral staff,
veterinary staff, clergy, educational staff)

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The *Remember, It's OK* book series:

Remember, It's OK: Loss of a Partner
Remember, It's OK: Loss of a Parent

Remember, It's OK: Loss for Teens
Remember, It's OK: Loss of a Sibling or Friend

Remember, It's OK: Loss of a Pet
Remember, It's OK: Loss of a Child

Creating a healing conversation around grief.

About the *Remember, It's OK* series of books:

The journey of grief speaks to the relationship we have with the loved one who has died whether that be a pet, a child, a parent, another family member or a significant friend. It is the loss of relationship that we struggle with and these Guidebooks along with the Remember books will help you navigate that journey successfully.

Remember, It's OK are experiential books. You will live these books, not just read them.

Whether you are a man or a woman, these books will support and guide you. Whether you have lost a friend or family member, these books will help you. If you don't know how to help someone you know who is in grief, these books will educate you.

Grief does not know religion, gender or sexual orientation. We are all effected by loss in our lives. Everyone is invited to heal.

There are unique elements to the *Remember, It's Ok* series. In each book you will find colours, prose and poetry, and blank pages. The guidebooks give you greater understanding about these elements.

Throughout each Guidebook, and your *Remember, It's OK* book, you will learn about the journey of grief, hear the voice of a grieving person, read the responses of a caring support person and journey into a new paradigm for grief.

Together, we will create a healing conversation around grief.

Key Elements

Colours

Colours have universal themes that have resonated throughout history. The colour choices for Moments were instinctual for us from the beginning:

Red – survival, urgency

Orange – beginning to find self, immediacy

Yellow - coming back to self, growing awareness

Green - learning to balance self, learning

Turquoise - what path am I on now, increased awareness and curiosity

Pale blue - clarity of new path, beginning to move forward, increased openness

Prose and Poetry

The *Remember, It's OK* series are books of Moments. These authentic expressions of grief are in the form of prose and sometimes poetry, written like private journal entries. They give the reader a 'moment', a glimpse into the experience of someone grieving, and an opportunity to observe the response of a caring support person or companion.

Each 'Moment' is a collection of many voices from those we interviewed during our creation process. It is not the voice of one person. We collected information and then created unique journal entries that fit into our colour paradigm and themes. It was an arduous challenge. The result is that each 'Moment' has many voices of those who have felt and suffered and healed, integrated into one.

You are not alone.

Blank Pages

Every Moment in the *Remember, It's Ok* books have blank pages. This is space we gave you to breathe, pause, reflect, before going forward to the next Moment. Some blank pages have a suggestion, giving concrete ways to experience emotions. Whether you are the one grieving or the support person, these blank pages have been included for you to document your own grief journey.

Guidebook Three: For The Support Person

This downloadable PDF Guidebook will give you directions and strategies as you seek to become a better support person as a friend, family member, health care provider, funeral staff, veterinarian staff, clergy or educational staff. This *Guidebook Three* is for you to use as an individual in the privacy of your own space, or by groups in an informal setting.

The experiential activities below for a group are designed to be done in person. However, if you have created a virtual group, the guidebooks will still work beautifully. Feel free to adapt as needed.

In order to get the most out of these Guidebooks and the *Remember, It's OK* books, we strongly suggest that you read *Guidebook One* first. *Guidebook One* explains our unique paradigm for grief which allows you to step out of limiting stages and embrace your grief through colours. It is where we reveal the truth about grief and dispel long held misconceptions and myths. As a support person, it is very important that you are able to understand this new grief paradigm.

We have woven the activities into the three major elements that are presented in each book in the Remember series: Colours, Prose and Poetry, Blank Pages. We recommend working through the Colour activities, then Prose and Poetry and finally Blank Pages. You could also choose to do one Colour activity, then move to a Prose and Poetry the next meeting, and a Blank Pages exercise the next. Then go back and start again. There is a lot to digest in each section and you will want to decide how much you want to do each time.

The activities below can be done each day, a few every other day, one a week or over a long weekend. You decide what works best for you. You are encouraged to create a timeframe that works best for you and try to stick to it. If all the activities below are completed, you will achieve a very visceral awareness of the grief journey. However, feel free to pick and choose the activities you complete if you have time restrictions or feel it is too much for you emotionally, at that time. You can always return to complete an activity at a later date.

How will you know when you are ready to help someone in grief? You will know when you are no longer uncomfortable in the presence of their suffering. You will know when you feel confident in the process of the grief journey. You will know when you feel a resonance with the Colours. This guidebook will help you achieve these objectives.

Let's Begin...

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL

When a friend or family member is suffering from the grief of loss, it can be tricky to know what to say and what to do to help them. As you saw in *Guidebook One*, the way we think about grief has been influenced by our family of origin, our society and our belief systems. This, in turn, will influence how you will support a grieving person. As you are reading this Guidebook, you want to become the best support you can be.

There are a few questions that need to be asked before you can be a successful support to a grieving person.

- How do you know how you feel about someone in grief?

First, write down what you think happens when someone is in grief and what they need.

Now, go back to *Guidebook One*. Read the truths about grief. Write down misconceptions you may have been holding and how you can change your own personal paradigm about grief.

- Do you have some grief work to do yourself that was left unfinished?

If you have suffered a loss yourself and never felt you received the help and support you needed, go to *Guidebook Two* and work through the exercises. Healing yourself will help you to be more gentle with the healing of another.

COLOURS

The use of colour in the grief journey is central to the *Remember, It's OK* series. The colours give you, the support person (as well as the one grieving) a new language for grief.

To be an effective support person, you will need to become very familiar with the colours, what they mean and how they can be used. Have a notebook and pen on hand to make notes, or your technological device, or record your observations on the blank pages in your *Remember, It's OK* book.

- ❖ How do you feel when you look/ think about each of the six colours used in the *Remember, It's Ok* books. Step into your feeling center here, not your analytical mind.

Here's How: Write down each colour at the top of a page. Now record any words or images or items you associate with that colour (feelings, food, objects, music, etc). This gives you a framework for how you feel about certain colours.

- ❖ Randomly read a Moment and then write down why you feel that Moment was included in that particular colour. Why would it not fit in another colour. Try to be as clear as possible with your answers. Use feelings and thoughts in your answers. Grief is more about feeling than thinking.
- ❖ Choose a colour and a Moment. Read the feelings of the one in grief. How are they expressing how they feel in the Moment in that particular colour. Note words they are using, tone, emotion. What do you learn. What was unexpected about what was written.

- ❖ You will begin to see that some Moments could go into either Red or Orange - becoming Red/Orange, yellow/orange, yellow/green, etc. You will see how the colours sometimes blend into each other, where the delineation between two adjacent colours is thin. How does this further enhance the colour experience.

You will also begin to see how different the first three colours (the hot colours) are from the second three colours (the cool colours). Think about the differences you notice and write them down.

What emotions do you feel between the first half of the book and the second;

- for the grieving person
- for the one supporting them

Jot down your observations.

- ❖ Intentionally start using the colours in conversations. Describe how you are feeling by using one of the colours.

Examples:

“Are you feeling in a Yellow place right now.”

“At work today, I got into a Red place.”

“At work today I was in such a Turquoise place.”

What colour do you feel at the dinner table, etc, etc. You will be surprised by your intuitive understanding of what you are feeling by using a colour. It will also become an opportunity to build conversations around the colours with the one in grief. “Are you in a Red colour today?” and so forth.

The Red and Orange colours will usually deal with very raw and difficult emotions for a person in grief. Use the *Remember, It's OK* book as a template for how to deal with difficult situations as a support person. It is helpful for you to read each Moment in Red and Orange for this purpose. There are times when a person in grief may consider suicide. Find this Moment in the Red section and read through it. Look through the Red and Orange colours for other intense content in the Moments. Make a note of how the one in grief is feeling and expressing that. And make notes about how the support person responds. There are other challenging Moments you will want to read in order to get an insight into how a grieving person is thinking, and how best to reply. Or not reply at all, and just provide a blanket and a warm drink. It is best to not offer alcohol to a person in initial experiences of their grief as there are many conflicting feelings occurring and alcohol may not be the best solution. In some cases, it can even aggravate a state of mind.

PROSE AND POETRY

The second unique element to the *Remember, It's OK* series is the use of first person in Prose and Poem Moments, giving voice and words to the one grieving and to the support person as they respond.

The Prose and the Poems are your window into the heart and experience of the grieving person. They are also a window into the supportive process.

1. As you read a Prose or Poem Moment, become aware of the *theme, tone, and word choice* used by the support person.

Here's How:

Write those three headings at the top of your page: Focus, Tone, Words Used. Use one page for the one in Grief, and one for the Support Person. Go through each colour and choose a Moment, read and record the focus, tone and key words used in that Moment for the one in grief, and then the support person. When you have completed this for at least one Moment in each colour pause and review your work.

What do you notice as differences between colours and speaker?

What do you notice as similarities?

What does this tell you about how you need to provide support to one in grief.

Try and begin to see the differences in the responses of the support person in each of the colour sections. The movement for the one responding mirrors the movement of the one grieving. Begin a new page in your notebook to record your observations as you randomly select Moments in your Remember book.

2. Prose and Poetry allow for different ways to process emotions.
Poems allow for more interpretation and space.
Prose is more direct with less interpretation needed.

Here's How:

Choose a piece of prose and analyze the content of the Moment from the point of view of the one in grief and then the support person. Look at tone, theme, word choice.

Then choose a poem from the same colour and do the same.

What do you notice?

Sometimes offering a poem to someone in grief can be a more gentle way to open a window or door to their emotions. Or for you to express yourself to the one in grief.

3. In the prose and poetry Moments, what is the grieving person teaching you?

Remember, grieving people do not grieve in a stage-like, linear way (see *Guidebook One* for more on this truth). Neither will your supportive responses move forward in a linear way. The Prose and the Poems model the theory behind the use of colours in this series. They show you what Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Turquoise and Pale Blue looks like and sounds like for both the grieving person and the one supporting.

As a support person it is also important to know there will be times you will feel that the direction things are going for the one in grief is too much for you. If you become concerned that their depression is not shifting with anything you offer, it is time to suggest they seek professional help. There are many good practitioners online if the one in grief is reluctant to leave their home. It may be helpful for you to have some suggestions, names, websites ready to offer. A person in grief may not have the ability to search themselves. You could reach out to a local hospice for some names and suggestions. If the one you are supporting has a health care provider, you could suggest they reach out to that person for professional guidance. If a situation warrants, do not hesitate to call 911.

BLANK PAGES

At first glance you may think the Blank Pages are just for the one grieving. And certainly, they are there for that purpose. However, we intentionally put the blank pages in place for you as well, the one wanting to learn how to become a better support person.

Here are some extra Blank Page Suggestions just for you:

- Pick a Moment in three different colours. After reading, write a letter on the blank page, expressing how witnessing this pain in another makes you feel.
- Create a collage that shows images of what you feel is important in a support person. (you will need a few supplies: magazines to cut out pictures, glue, scissors, markers, large paper if you prefer or create on a technological device)
- After reading a Moment from each of the six colours, what changes do you see in the grieving person and the support person? You can show this by doing a drawing, writing your own Moment or a poem.

What surprised you? Surprises can often show us where we are still holding on to a misconception about grief and how to support grieving people better.

How to use Blank Page Suggestions in your Remember, It's OK book:

- Randomly select a Blank Page Suggestion in your book and do what it is asking. You may have to imagine that loss in your own life.

After doing the suggestion, how did it feel to create something to express a feeling?

How important do you think kinesthetic, tactile expressions of a feeling are after your experience with this activity?

Do this with as many Blank Page Suggestions as you like. The more you do, the more you will come to understand grief more openly.

- Use the extra blank pages in your book as your own journal and try to answer the following questions. They don't have to be done in a day.
- How are you feeling about how you have supported grieving people in the past?
- What are your big take-aways from doing the above exercises?
- What can you be kind to yourself right now?
- What are your hopes as you seek to become a better support person?
- What are areas you need to work on?

Date each entry and come back to it over time. How are you changing in your support of grieving people and your own view of grief?

Final Thoughts

Learning how to support grieving people becomes a lifelong journey of discovery. The fascinating thing is that when you become open to being taught by the one grieving, you will be changed. Your mind and your heart are being touched in ways that will slowly transform you. You have taken some fantastic steps today. Congratulations.

How will you know when you are ready to help someone in grief? You will know when you are no longer uncomfortable in the presence of their suffering. You will know when you feel confident in the process of the grief journey. You will know when you feel a resonance with the Colours. You will know.

Bravo!!!

You have entered a new paradigm for grief.

You are now part of the healing conversation around grief!!

FOR A GROUP

This section is for an informal group of people seeking to learn how to become effective, compassionate support people. The format given could be used in settings where there is either a Facilitator or no Facilitator. This is for a group of friends, family members, clergy, health care providers, veterinarian staff, educational staff, funeral staff and anyone who deals with those who are grieving. If there is no official facilitator, someone will offer to lead the group each day, or names can be put into a hat and drawn for the leader of each meeting. Working in a group affords the opportunity to learn from others on a similar quest and to expand our perspectives. In a group setting, as words are spoken out-loud and as role-playing is introduced, the language of grief becomes more comfortable and natural. Again, your timeline is up to your group.

See *Guidebook Four* if your gathering wants a more structured way of setting up a group workshop.

Prior to the first gathering of your group, complete the following housekeeping tasks:

1. Select one of the *Remember, it's Ok* books. Each person will need their own book. They may select it based on a loss they have experienced or by one that interests them.
2. Read *Guidebook One* of this Guidebook series. It is important that you begin by acknowledging assumptions, misconceptions and truths about grief.
3. A location and time for the gatherings needs to be determined. This could be held over a long weekend or at a select time that is consistent during the week. The length of time is up to each group and what matches the needs of the ones learning.

Let's Begin!

The starting place for the group is our Grief Paradigm, as found in *Guidebook One*. Make sure everyone has a copy of *Guidebook One*.

Here are some activities to familiarize each person with their own beliefs around grief and how to shift them.

Write the numbers 1 - 13 on small pieces of paper and put them into a bowl. These are the number of truths outlined in *Guidebook One*. Each participant picks one, and when each person has their paper, the facilitator/leader determines who will begin. That person then reads their truth from the *Guidebook One* out loud. A discussion then begins after each point is read:

- did you feel this way about grief?
- how do you feel now that it has been exposed?
- how can you begin to think differently?
- do you know others that feel this way?
- what effect will this 'truth' have on a person in grief if misconstrued

Each member selects the point that stood out to them and shares what it taught them;

- about themselves
- about grieving people.

It is helpful if the leader records the highlights of each conversation. This will create a web of information that the group discovers over the course of their time together. It can be emailed to all participants. It is a perfect way to wrap up your time together at the end of your meetings. You can also review what was recorded at the beginning of your next meeting as a starting point.

Colours

The use of colour to express the grief journey is central to the *Remember, It's OK* series. The colours give the support person, as well as the one grieving, a new language, one that fosters a healing conversation around grief. The leader for that day may want to read through the activities beforehand. There are a lot of tough questions being asked here and the answers allow each person to move into a new paradigm for grief. It may be advantageous to select which activities and questions will be explored for the meeting each day or session.

Activities:

1. Have each of the six *Remember, It's OK* colours to show the group. Helpful if someone picks up colour chips for each of the six *Remember* colours, enough for each member of the group would be ideal, but at least one set is fine.
 - The leader shows one colour chip and each person writes down the first three words that come to their minds upon seeing that colour.
 - Then, in three words, describe how that colour makes them feel.
 - Would you ever buy clothes in that colour? Why or why not and what would the clothes be?
 - Begin a conversation about colour in our lives and how they affect us on a daily basis. (If this is a virtual meeting, each person will have to get their own set of six colour chips.)
2. Participants select a colour from their *Remember, It's OK* book and then proceed to read the Moment when it is their turn. You can deal with the following questions individually after the Moment is read out loud, and then share after each participant has had time to jot down their feelings. Or, you can take one question at a time and go around the group after each reading. This way, you can do a few questions for each meeting. It is totally up to your group.

Here are some things to ponder after reading a Moment of any colour:

- what emotions are brought forward after hearing this Moment
- how does the reading make you feel, not think, feel
- what did you learn about the grieving person
- what did you learn about the support person
- what did you learn about yourself
- did this Moment make you uncomfortable? Why?

The things that make an individual uncomfortable are key to understanding their own comprehension of grief. It is important to expose these feelings in order to be able to work with someone in grief. Do you hold a bias? Be gentle when exploring these ideas. Remember, they have been handed to us by family, religion, culture, society. And it is within our power to change. But first we have to become aware.

3. You will begin to see that some Moments could go into either Red or Orange becoming Red/Orange, Yellow/Orange, Yellow/Green, etc. You will see how the colours sometimes blend into each other, where the delineation between two adjacent colours is thin. You will also begin to see how different the first three colours (the hot colours) are from the second three colours (the cool colours). Have each person in the group choose a colour and a Moment to read out loud. Go around the gathering and listen to each reading, one after the other. Have the participant stress the colour they are reading from.

After everyone has read:

- Think about the differences you notice in the colours and write them down.
- What emotions do you feel between the first half of the book and the second, for the grieving person and then the one supporting. Jot down your observations.
- Did you feel that any moments could have been blended or even be in a different colour. Really talk this out with the group. Give key words and phrases that validate your thinking and choices.

Intentionally start using the colours in conversations and discussions your group has from this point forward.

Each time you meet, during your debriefing from the previous session, invite each participant to describe how they are feeling by using one of the colours.

Example:

“I am feeling in a Yellow place right now” and then explain why they are choosing that colour. You don’t need to be in a place of grief to feel the colours. You will be surprised by the intuitive understanding of what you are feeling by using a colour.

It will also become an opportunity to build conversations around the colours. As you work through the activities, try and begin to express yourself by using colour language. The better you become at using colour language, the easier you will find it to converse with someone in grief. You can ask them what colour they are in that day and remind them that it is all fluid and can change often.

NOTE: The Red and Orange colours will usually deal with very raw and difficult emotions for a person in grief. Use the *Remember, It’s OK* book as a template for how to deal with difficult situations. It is helpful for you to read each Moment in Red and Orange for this purpose. There are times when a person in grief may consider suicide. Find this moment in the Red section and read through it. Look through the Red and Orange colours for other intense content in the Moments. Make a note of how the one in grief is feeling. And make notes about how the support person responds. There are other challenging Moments you will want to read in order to get an insight into how a grieving person is thinking, and how best to reply. Or not reply at all, and just provide a blanket and a warm drink. It is best to not offer alcohol to a person in initial experiences of their grief as there are many conflicting feelings occurring and alcohol may not be the best solution. In some cases, it can even aggravate a state of mind.

PROSE AND POETRY

The second unique element to the *Remember, It's OK* series is the use of first person Prose and Poems, giving voice and words to the one grieving and to the support person as they respond.

The Prose and the Poems are your window into the heart and experience of the grieving person. They are also a window into supportive responses and how you can listen and find empathy for the one in pain.

Make sure to chart what the group learns, to not only capture the insights, but also to hear the words out loud and see them in black and white.

Activities:

1. Each participant chooses a colour and a Moment written in *Prose*. When it is their turn, they read out loud. After, the discussion centers around:
 - ❖ the focus or theme of the entry
 - ❖ the tone
 - ❖ the key words or word choice used by the support/companion voice. Notice words that feel important, words that are repeated, strategies that are repeated by the support person. Discuss these points together to consolidate them. They become your cornerstone for giving support.

As you read prose Moments from different colours, make notes about what, if anything, changes in the way the support person responds in different colours. It would be good for the leader to record comments for review or email later.

2. Do the same exercise but turn to *Poetry* found in the colours.
 - ❖ How do these differ from prose Moments?
 - ❖ Do you get more from the support person? Less? Why?

3. Now do the same exercise above, but this time focus on the grieving person.
 - ❖ What do you learn from their words?
 - ❖ How do you feel as you hear their words spoken out loud?
 - ❖ What makes you uncomfortable or surprises you?

4. As you read Moments from different colours, make notes about what changes in the way the grieving person talks;
 - The language and words they begin to use, and not use anymore as colours change.
It would be good for the leader to write these down on chart paper to review later.

5. Now concentrate on the focus/theme, tone and word choice of the grieving person in the Poetry in different colours:
 - How do these differ from prose Moments?
 - Do you get more from the grieving person? Less? Why?

NOTE: As a support person it is also important to know there will be times you will feel that the direction things are going for the one in grief is too much for you. If you become concerned that their depression is not shifting with anything you offer, it is time to suggest they seek professional help. There are many good practitioners online if the one in grief is reluctant to leave their home. It may be helpful for you to have some suggestions, names, websites ready to offer. A person in grief may not have the ability to search themselves. You could reach out to a local hospice or your health care provider for some names and suggestions. If the one you are supporting has a health care provider, you could suggest they reach out to that person for professional guidance. If a situation warrants, do not hesitate to call 911.

The big idea in this section is to hear the voice of the grieving person, learning what they are teaching us about grief, and to hear the voice of the support person, learning from their modeling of how to be there for a grieving person. The movement for the one responding mirrors the movement of the one grieving. Add these insights to the chart your group is creating.

BLANK PAGES

At first glance you may think the Blank Pages are for the one grieving. And certainly they are there for that purpose. However, we intentionally put them in place for you, the one wanting to learn how to become a better support person. This is your opportunity to see how it feels for the grieving person to be given some suggestions in their grief journey.

- You will notice that the Blank Page Suggestions are not after every Moment. Discuss as a group or in pairs, why do you think that is? What do you learn about “suggestions” being made to the grieving person?

- Select a Blank Page suggestion for the group to complete or to be done in small groups. How does it feel to actually create something to express a feeling?

- Encourage each participant to use the extra blank pages as their own journal. Date each journal entry and come back to it over time. Consider the following as items for your journal:
 - How are you feeling about how you have supported grieving people in the past?
 - What are your big take-aways from doing the above exercises?
 - What can you say to be kind to yourself right now?
 - What are your hopes as you seek to become a better support person?
 - What are areas that you see you need to work on?
 - How are you changing in your support of grieving people and what has the response been from them?

Share with the group what you have learned through your journaling.

Your informal group has now experienced what it means to be a support person for one in grief.

Talk about your experience.

How has being together, with others on this journey, impacted you?

Final Thoughts

Learning how to support grieving people becomes a lifelong journey of discovery. The fascinating thing is that when you become open to being taught by the one grieving, you will be changed. Your mind and your heart are being touched in ways that will slowly transform you. You have taken some fantastic steps today. Congratulations.

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Bravo!!!

You have entered a new paradigm for grief.

You are now part of the healing conversation around grief!!

NOTE:

If you would like to know more about our books (how we created them, about the colours we chose, what was our process etc) please go to our websites. There you will find podcasts, articles and pages that will give you more in-depth information about the books and how to care for yourself, as one in grief or as a support person. Each website will offer something unique.

RememberItIsOk.com

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