



Worksheet #3: Understanding Anticipatory Grief

What Is Anticipatory Grief?

Anticipatory grief is the emotional experience of grieving **before a loss occurs**.

As a parent, you may find yourself grieving changes, uncertainty, or possibilities—while still caring for and loving your child in the present.

This can feel confusing, overwhelming, and sometimes isolating.

1. Recognizing Your Experience

You may be experiencing anticipatory grief if you notice:

- ☐ Waves of sadness that come and go
- ☐ Fear about the future
- ☐ Feeling emotionally overwhelmed
- ☐ Moments of numbness or disconnection
- ☐ Guilt for thinking about “what if”
- ☐ Trying to stay strong while feeling exhausted

What have you been noticing in yourself?

2. Naming the Feelings

You may be holding many emotions at once.

Right now, I feel:

- ☐ Sad



- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Afraid
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Numb
- ☐ Hopeful
- ☐ Grateful
- ☐ Other: _____

What feels hardest to sit with right now?

3. Guilt & Conflicting Emotions

Many parents feel guilt when experiencing grief while their child is still here.

Gentle reminders:

- Grieving does **not** mean giving up hope
- You can feel love, hope, and grief at the same time
- Your emotions do not take away from your presence as a parent

One thought I've been having that feels hard or confusing:

A more compassionate way to respond to myself:

4. Staying in the Present

When thoughts about the future feel overwhelming, gently bring yourself back:

Right now, in this moment:



- My child is: _____
 - I can: _____
 - One thing I want to focus on today: _____
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5. Holding Both: Love & Grief

It's possible to hold both deep love and deep grief at the same time.

A meaningful moment I've had with my child recently:

Something I want to remember or hold onto:

6. Giving Yourself Permission

Read this slowly:

- It's okay to feel what I'm feeling
- I am doing the best I can in an incredibly difficult situation
- I do not have to carry this alone

One thing I need to give myself permission to do:

7. Support Matters

You don't have to navigate this on your own.

Someone I can talk to or reach out to:



1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Closing Thought

Anticipatory grief is a reflection of love. It means you are deeply connected, deeply caring, and deeply present.

You are allowed to take this one moment, one breath, one day at a time.

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