

Loss Inventory Assignment

A loss inventory allows you to experience a powerful exercise that you can use with clients either: a) towards the beginning of therapy--if they suffer from depression, sometimes a major component is un-grieved losses; b) in the middle of therapy--if they are stuck in their lives, sometimes it's due to avoidance of pain associated with loss; or c) at the end of therapy--most people have trouble with endings and losses, and this assignment gives clients an opportunity to increase their awareness of how loss has impacted them, and for you and your clients to mindfully say goodbye to one another knowing more what loss means to them.

Here are the instructions for the assignment:

Sometimes we stay stuck in our lives unless we look directly at the ways we've been wounded and we grieve. This is an exercise that allows you to acknowledge what you have loved and lost, the hurts, disappointments, endings, and betrayals you have endured. In validating our losses, we begin the grieving process.

In writing your inventory, consider the following: What are the losses you've endured in your life that stand out to you from earliest memory to the present; what has made you sad, what has broken your heart, what has left a gap in your life; what do good-byes bring up for you?

There is no right or wrong way to do this. Just let your heart speak to you as you review the losses you have experienced. Be gentle with yourself as you complete this inventory, and contact your friends, family, or your therapist for support if needed.

Losses or endings typically bring new beginnings or ways of being. Often, but not always, it helps to look at what was gained as a result of the loss. But that type of perspective takes time and each grief journey is unique. Only if you find it helpful at this time, also write about what has resulted from each loss that feels healing.

Below are examples from individuals who have done the **loss inventory**:

--One of the earliest painful memories was when I stayed with my grandmother because my mother was about to give birth and there were unexplained "complications." My dad would visit us and I can still remember seeing the red tail-lights of his car as he drove away. Longing to go with him... [gained: sense of empathy and compassion]

--when I think of a "gap in my life" growing up, the biggest one was a sense that I never quite measured up to my dad's expectations. Envious when I would see other fathers and sons with an easy relationship. [gained: sense of ambition]

--I moved around so much when I was little that I felt uprooted and friendless much of the time. [gained: ability to make friends as I got older]

--my parents' divorce when I was 7. [gained: understanding of others whose parents divorced early]

--**Loss** of my wonderful mother due to lung cancer.

--loss of my dog who our entire family loved. Felt helpless as he had multiple seizures, didn't know what was wrong. [have had several dogs I have loved after this one]
--my sister who developed schizophrenia
--my grandpa who died when I was 8. I remember bargaining with God to let him stay a little longer in my life and when it didn't happen, I lost my trust in God
-- loss of my virginity at age 15 to someone who didn't care about me. [gained: I chose my partners more wisely after that]
--loss of my innocence because I was sexually abused as a child.
-- loss of my first love, loss of trust in others, loss of trust in my intuition, loss of sense of security, loss of feeling special to someone
--loss of belief in the inherent goodness of others after being sexually assaulted.
--my friend who committed suicide in college.
--2 of my closest friends getting married. [gained: Though these friends could not be replaced, I did make other close friends]