

Group Eleven

MOVING BEYOND GRIEF

Skills to Be Taught

- Understanding the Stages of Grief
- Facing and Coping with Fears about HIV
- Identifying and Prioritizing That Which Has Personal Meaning



COUNSELOR TOOL BOX

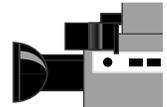
Multi-modal Presentation of Material:

Verbal Didactic presentation of material
Questioning
Group discussion



Visual Visual presentation of major points using slides
Group responses written on flipchart by counselor
Written/Pictorial handouts provided in Client Workbook

Experiential “Letting go of fear” individual exercise
Team Game: “Remember me by what I valued”
Post-group quiz
Stress management/relaxation technique



Materials Flipcharts and markers
Overhead projector and slides
Audio tape player and relaxation tape
Clock/timer
Pens/pencils
Prizes
“Loaner” Client Workbooks
Handouts:
Group agenda
Group quiz
“Letting Go of Fear” Client Worksheet
Amusing Epitaphs
Team Game Worksheet: “Remember Me by What I Valued”
Certificate of Achievement (as warranted)



Reminders Ensure that all material on quiz is covered well during group.
Quiz material is indicated by **QUIZ ITEM** in the text.
Instructions to counselors are provided in **this typeface.**



AGENDA

(Two-hour group: Adjust times based on beginning time)

- 0:00 **Begin Group** (5 mins)
 Introductions – Rules – Time keeper assignment
- 0:05 **Introduction to Topic:** Moving beyond Grief (5 mins)
- 0:10 **Stages of Grief** (10 mins)
- 0:20 **Grief and HIV Discussion** (5 mins)
- 0:25 **Fears about HIV** (10 mins)
- 0:35 **Facing Fear and Reclaiming Control** (10 mins)
- 0:45 **Exercise:** “Letting go of fear” (15 mins)
- 0:00** **BREAK** (10 mins)
- 1:10 **Review** (5 mins)
- 1:15 **Spiritual Growth** (5 mins)
- 1:20 **Humor and Healing** (5 mins)
- 1:25 **Game:** Epitaphs (20 mins)
- 1:45 **Quiz and Feedback** (5 mins)
- 1:50 **Relaxation Tape** (10 mins)
- 2:00 **End**

BEGINNING OF EVERY GROUP (5 mins)

- Group members and counselors introduce themselves and welcome new members.
- Group rules are reviewed.

Visual

HHRP⁺
GROUP RULES **RESPECT**

R*elaxation* (complete quiet...no talking, shuffling of papers, or walking around during relaxation exercise)

E*ating* (No eating during group)

S*ober* (don't come to group high)

P*unctuality* (come to group on time)

E*veryone can't talk at once* (no crosstalk)

C*onfidentiality* (what's said in group, stays in group)

T*eamwork* (group members work together towards recovery)

Show Slide 11.1

- Copy of agenda for today's group is distributed to group members.
- Ask for a volunteer to serve as time-keeper (to keep group on track and on time).
- Announcement of any graduates from the group today.
- Presentation of Certificate of Achievement to those who complete in good standing.

Verbal

Counselor provides introduction to today's topic. (5 mins)

Today we are going to be talking about grief. When we think about grief we usually think about grieving over the death of a loved one, but grief is actually a normal human response to loss of any kind. **QUIZ ITEM**

WHAT IS GRIEF?

**A normal
human response
to loss of any kind**

Show Slide 11.2

Grieving is an unavoidable part of living for all of us. No one is immune. We grieve when we lose people and pets who are important to us, we also grieve when we lose things that are important to us (even giving up drugs is a loss that many long-time drug users grieve), and we grieve if we are diagnosed with a potentially debilitating illness that can threaten our lives, impair our functioning, or end a cherished lifestyle.

People who are infected with HIV are faced with a profound sense of loss on many levels. If this grief is not addressed, it can lead to feelings of helplessness, continued high risk behavior, including drug use, and to lack of follow-through with medical care. The purpose of today's group is to understand the process of grieving so that you can begin to move beyond grief into hope. Part of this process involves identifying and facing your fears. This can be a highly creative force in finding personal meaning in life. I understand that this may be difficult for some of you, so you should go at your own pace. However, I encourage you to use this opportunity to go a little deeper than you might otherwise, and to trust that within each of you is a source of strength and wisdom that can handle whatever comes up. Grief is something that people don't often talk about, but it can influence decisions we make in our lives that can affect our own health and the health of others, and so it is very important to address. That's what we will begin to do today.

Counselor provides instruction on stages of grief. (10 mins)

Verbal/
Didactic

According to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who wrote several books on grief—**grief is a process**—that means that people go through various stages when they are faced with a loss. You may not go through all the stages she describes, and you may not go through them exactly in the order she speci-

fies; however, having an understanding of the different stages of grief and being able to identify where you are in the process can be extremely helpful in moving you forward.

Visual

STAGES OF GRIEF

1. **Denial**
"No, this cannot be true"
(may isolate oneself from reality of situation)
2. **Anger**
"This isn't fair. Why me?"
(may take anger out on people or objects to distance oneself from pain)
3. **Bargaining**
"There must be something I can do to change this."
(May promise to be a better person if God fixes everything)
4. **Depression**
"I can't handle this pain and I'm helpless to do anything about it"
(may shut down physically and emotionally; may turn to drug abuse or other unhealthy behavior)
5. **Acceptance**
"I have experienced a painful loss but I can get through it."
(may identify and face fears; identify what is under one's control and act accordingly)
6. **Hope**
"I am ready to learn from this important life experience."
(may seek personal meaning from the loss through spiritual growth)

Show Slide 11.3

This slide shows the six stages of grieving described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. They are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and hope.

QUIZ ITEM We'll go over them one at a time, and then discuss how they may relate to having HIV.

STAGE 1. Denial

This is the stage when the person thinks, **"No, this just cannot be true."** We've probably all said this when faced with terrible news. Denying something is true is a common way of initially dealing with a painful situation. At first, one may feel totally unable to accept the bad news. In this stage of denial we might isolate ourselves in an attempt to defend against the reality of the situation.

Although denial is a normal stage of grief, if we remain in this stage too long we will be unable to make necessary and important decisions.

STAGE 2. Anger

The next stage is anger. This is the stage in which the person acknowledges the reality of the situation, but is filled with rage at the loss and thinks, **"This isn't fair; why did this have to happen to me?"** When a loved one dies, we may be angry at whatever took our loved one's life, angry at God, even angry at the loved one for leaving us. Although feeling angry is normal, we may displace our anger. This means taking anger out on other people or things. It may feel as if everything and everyone is irritating us

and so we lash out and are completely unaware that this is a manifestation of our grief. Although displaced anger may serve to distance us from the pain and reality of the loss, it can create problems in personal relationships, especially if the people around us do not understand that we are grieving. It can even lead to legal problems if we physically act out our anger on people or property.

STAGE 3. **Bargaining**

The next stage is bargaining. This is a stage that people sometimes go through when they are facing the loss of their own life or the life of a loved one. They think **“There must be something I can do to change this.”** We may try to make bargains with God by promising to do something difficult (often something that we are unlikely to be able to do), in exchange for removing the threat of loss. For example, we might pray, “God, if you spare my loved one’s life, I promise to be a better person.” When feeling powerless, bargaining may provide us with the illusion that we are actually doing something to help, but as with the previous stage, if we remain in this stage too long, it can prevent us from coping realistically with the situation and taking appropriate action.

STAGE 4. **Depression**

The next stage is depression. In this stage, the reality of the loss has really “sunk in.” Denial, anger, and bargaining give way to despair, and we think **“I cannot handle this pain and I’m helpless to do anything about it.”** We may attempt to withdraw from the world and to “shut down our circuits” in an attempt to defend ourselves against the pain of the loss. Although profound sadness in response to loss is normal, it is important not to get stuck in this stage. As you all know, depression can quickly lead to drug use and other unhealthy behavior.

STAGE 5. **Acceptance**

The next stage is acceptance. This is the stage where we move beyond defending ourselves from the pain of the loss with denial, anger, and depression, and begin to accept reality. We may think **“I have experienced a painful loss, but I can get through it.”** When we are in the earlier stages of grieving, it seems that acceptance is an unattainable goal. However, it is important to keep in mind that acceptance is neither unattainable nor is it the ultimate goal. Acceptance is not the end of the process, but rather a necessary step that will move you beyond grief to the next stage which is hope.

STAGE 6. **Hope**

We have reached the final stage—hope—when we reflect upon the loss in search of personal meaning. In this stage we may think **“I am ready to learn from this important life experience.”** As we will discuss later, finding personal meaning in a loss involves being willing to identify and face your fears.

Before we talk about fear, let’s consider how the six stages of grieving can be applied to HIV and addiction.

Questions for group discussion:

Counselor leads discussion about grief and HIV by asking the following questions: (5 mins)

1. Do people grieve when they find out they are HIV-positive?
2. Did any of you go through these stages after you were told you were infected with HIV?
3. Does your addiction keep you stuck in any one stage?
4. What stage are you in now?

Let’s talk now about what keeps us stuck in any one stage and how to move beyond the stages of grief to hope.

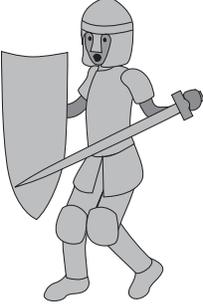
**Verbal/
Didactic**

Counselor leads discussion on fear. (10 mins)

We talked about the first four stages of grief as providing temporary protection from the reality of being infected with HIV. In fact, what you are really trying to protect yourselves from is not HIV itself, but your fears about how HIV can affect your lives. Some of these fears may be justified; however, many fears that people have may not accurately reflect reality. **QUIZ ITEM** You’ve probably all heard the saying: “You have nothing to fear but fear itself.” What this means is **fear is our worst enemy** because it can cause more harm than anything else. Let’s consider how fear can impede people who are infected with HIV from moving beyond grief to hope.

FEAR IS YOUR WORST ENEMY

FEAR OF:
Death
Suffering
Harm to loved ones
Loss of lifestyle



You have nothing to fear but fear itself

Show Slide 11.4

As shown on the slide, some common fears for people with HIV include:

- Fear of death—this may include fear of the unknown, fear that one’s life had no meaning.
- Fear of suffering—this may include fear of pain, medical procedures, loss of physical, mental, social functioning.
- Fear of harm to loved ones—this may include fear of emotional and financial hardship for family and friends, transmission of HIV to others.
- Fear of loss of lifestyle—this is not the same as fear of death. It can include fear of having to give up old routines, habits, style of coping.

As the slide suggests, it is important to realize that you can expend a lot of energy trying to defend yourselves against your own fears, putting on layers of armor to protect you from harm, when in fact your fears may not accurately reflect reality. **QUIZ ITEM**

Counselor asks group members if there are any additional fears that they have, and writes these on the board.

Visual

Potential Consequences of Defending Yourself against YOUR FEAR

If you focus on defending yourself from your fears, you may

- use valuable energy that would be better used to protect your health
- prevent yourself from moving beyond grief to hope

If you become stuck in one of the earlier stages of grief, you may

- be less likely to protect yourself from further harm
- be less likely to follow medical advice
- be less likely to be abstinent from illicit drugs

Show Slide 11.5

As this slide shows, the reality is that focusing on defending yourself from your fears may actually:

- prevent you from taking steps to protect your health. **QUIZ ITEM**
- prevent you from moving beyond grief to hope.

If you become stuck in one of the earlier stages of grief, you may:

- be less likely to protect yourself and others from further harm.
- be less likely to follow medical advice, including not taking medication as prescribed.
- be less likely to be abstinent from illicit drugs.

So, what is the result of all this? The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Your **response** to your fears can actually turn your fears into reality. Let's see how this could happen. Remember our friend Pat from previous groups? Let's use Pat again to demonstrate self-fulfilling prophecy.

Visual

PAT'S SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY



I'm afraid HIV will make me unable to function

PAT'S FEAR

- HIV disease progression
- impaired functioning



PAT'S DEFENSE AGAINST FEAR

- Pat uses cocaine
- doesn't follow medical advice



See, I was right. Look what HIV did to me.

PAT'S FUTURE

- cocaine use worsens HIV effects
- HIV disease progresses
- functioning is impaired

Show Slide 11.6

As the slide shows, Pat’s fear about HIV is its potential impact on mental, physical, and social functioning. To defend against this fear, Pat begins a cocaine run and stops taking his HIV medications as prescribed. As we have discussed in previous groups, cocaine use itself can hasten HIV disease progression, and can contribute substantially to mental, physical, and social impairment. So Pat’s response to fear (use of cocaine) caused Pat’s fears to become a reality. Pat’s HIV disease quickly progressed to AIDS, and Pat also experienced severe impairment due to physical, neurological, and psychological damage caused by chronic drug use. This is an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy. **QUIZ ITEM** Rather than understanding this, Pat is likely to say “See I told you I was right—look what has happened to me because of HIV.” In fact, Pat may not have experienced these negative events if it were not for the fact that Pat dealt with fear by using cocaine and by not following medical advice.

So what do you do if you can’t defend yourself from your fears?

Simply put, you have to have the courage to face your fears in order to reduce the power that these fears have over you and your life.

Counselor instructs group on facing fear and reclaiming control. (10 mins)

Verbal/
Didactic

Facing your fears allows you to take control—when you do this you take the power out of the fear so that it no longer rules you. Let’s go over the ways to face your fears shown on the slide.

FACING FEAR
Where do you have control?

<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Death</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Make a living will Make funeral arrangements Make wishes known Replace fear with peace through imagery Find meaning in the present moment </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Suffering</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Become more knowledgeable about HIV Talk to health care provider and counselors Take steps to slow disease progression </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Harm To Loved Ones</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Have an up-to-date will Talk to loved ones about your fear and their fears Join a support group with your loved one Engage in harm reduction strategies to reduce risk of transmission </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Loss Of Lifestyle</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Identify what is important to you. Investigate alternative ways to meet needs </div>

Show Slide 11.7

Visual

1. If you fear **Death**, face the fact of your death—not because you have HIV, but because you are a human being; therefore your death, like that of all creatures on earth, is inevitable. Most of us don't want to contemplate the inevitable physical death of our bodies. It takes courage, but the alternative is fear and withdrawal which blocks energy needed for living life fully. One way to reduce the fear of death is to take control of those aspects of your death that you can control:
 - a. Have a living will that will inform people if you do not wish to be kept alive by any artificial means. If you don't have an attorney, you can obtain a Living Will in many stationery stores.
 - b. Make your wishes known about the disposal of your physical remains. Do you wish to be buried or cremated?
 - c. Identify someone you can trust to make choices for you if you can no longer make them for yourself and discuss your wishes with this person.
 - d. If fear is an automatic response to thoughts of death, replace the fear with an automatic relaxation response. Do this exercise daily:

Counselor reads the following autogenic relaxation script:

Sit quietly and with your eyes closed begin to think about death. As soon as you become aware of feeling fearful, rate your fear on a scale from zero to ten (not at all to extremely), and then do one of the relaxation exercises we have discussed in previous groups. For example, tighten and then relax each major muscle group while continuing to think about death. Then re-rate your fear. Were you able to reduce it? With practice, your body will no longer respond automatically to thoughts of death with fear, but with a sense of peace and relaxation.

- e. If you fear death because you worry that life has had no meaning, remember meaning is found in the present moment. Looking to the future for happiness or living in the past is a set-up for disappointment. Ultimately, we have no assurance of anything beyond this present moment. There really is no future or past—just a continuous progression of **now** moments. We all need to make the most of each moment.
2. If you fear **Suffering**, becoming more informed can help reduce this fear. Become more knowledgeable about HIV. **QUIZ ITEM** Talk to your health care provider and counselor and read about HIV. Ask about the probability of pain and/or disability due to HIV. Ask how pain is controlled. Ask about medical procedures. Remember that your fears are usually worse than reality. Find out what steps you can take right now

to help slow disease progression, and act on it. This includes abstaining from drugs and following medical regimens.

3. If you fear that you will cause **Harm to Loved Ones**, take steps to reduce harm:
 - Have an up-to-date will and make provisions for the care of loved ones.
 - Talk to your loved ones about your fears and their fears.
 - Join a support group with your loved one.
 - Engage in harm reduction strategies to reduce risk of HIV transmission to others and further harm to yourself.

4. If you fear **Loss of Your Current Lifestyle**, identify what is most important to you about your lifestyle—what do you truly value—investigate alternative ways to meet your needs. For example, if you fear loss of sexual intimacy, learn how to eroticize safer sexual practices.

Letting go of fear (15 mins)

Counselor provides instruction for the exercise, as follows:

**Experiential/
Exercise**

In your Client Workbook you will find a worksheet entitled “Letting go of fear.” It asks you to consider what stage of grieving you are in currently and to identify your fears about HIV. It then asks you to select one of the fears you listed and to describe just one specific step you can take during the coming week that will help you let go of this fear. Then make a commitment to take this step on a particular day or days during the coming week.

It also asks you to consider what is really important to you in your life—what do you realistically want to accomplish in your lifetime. Then select one of these lifetime goals and describe just one specific step you can take in the coming week towards accomplishing one of your goals. Make a commitment to take this step on a particular day or days during the coming week. Clearly this is an ongoing process and needs to be done thoughtfully. Today, we’ll take just 10–15 minutes to get you started. I encourage you to continue outside of group identifying specific steps to let go of each of your fears.

Counselor directs group members to the appropriate page in their Workbook, (Counselor provides a handout to those group members who did not bring their Workbook), and instructs group members to begin. Counselors walk around the room to offer assistance as needed.

Counselor calls time after 10–15 minutes and encourages group members to complete the exercise at home as follows:

Again, I strongly encourage all of you to continue working on this process outside of group. You might even want to involve a loved one so that you can work together on letting go of fear. Commit yourself to getting started right now. You **can** reclaim control. You **can** free yourself from the power your fears have over you. If you do, you **can** begin to live every moment of your life to its fullest potential.

When we get back from break, we'll be lightening things up a bit and talking about how to diffuse fear with humor.

Break

(10 mins)

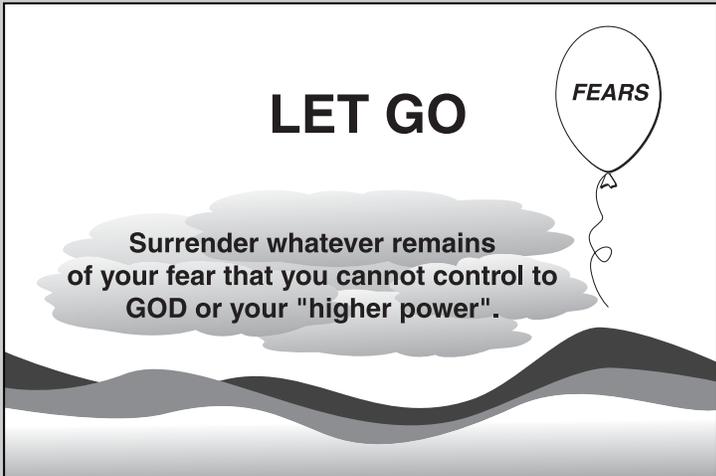
Review

Counselor reviews material covered before the break. (5 mins)

Before the break we talked about grief, which is a normal human response to loss of any kind **QUIZ ITEM** and the 6 stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and hope. **QUIZ ITEM** If you get stuck in the first four stages, you cannot move beyond grief to hope. We talked about how fear can keep you stuck in early stages of grief and how it can prevent you from engaging in behavior that can protect your physical, emotional, and social well-being. Fear can prevent you from taking steps to maintain your health. **QUIZ ITEM** In addition, even though fears do not always accurately reflect reality **QUIZ ITEM**, they can lead to behaviors that are unsafe (such as drug use) that can actually cause those fears to become a reality. This is an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy **QUIZ ITEM**, and explains the saying “you have nothing to fear but fear itself”—fear can actually be your worst enemy. Identifying and facing your fears will help you move beyond grief to hope. This takes courage, and entails identifying what you do, and do not, have control over, and then taking appropriate action. This may include: having an up-to-date Will; expressing your wishes concerning use of life support systems and funeral arrangements; becoming more knowledgeable about the course of HIV; **QUIZ ITEM** keeping up to date on the latest treatments; discussing your fears with professionals and loved ones; engaging in risk reduction strategies; and prioritizing what is most important to you in your life so that you can live each moment fully.

Once you have identified what you can control and have taken appropriate action, you are left with what cannot be controlled. This is when you simply need to let go.

You may have heard the saying, “**Let go and let God.**”



Show Slide 11.8

The slide features a central graphic with the text "LET GO" in large, bold letters. Below it, a cloud contains the text "Surrender whatever remains of your fear that you cannot control to GOD or your 'higher power'." To the right, a balloon labeled "FEARS" is shown floating away. The background of the slide is a simple landscape with a wavy horizon line.

Visual

You can replace the word “God” in this saying with whatever concept is meaningful to you. What you need to do is to “turn over” or “surrender” what you cannot control to your higher power, however you interpret that to be meaningful in your life. Remember from our group on the 12-steps that “higher power” can mean different things to different people. The primary goal is to let go of what you cannot possibly control. As shown in the slide, imagine putting what you cannot control in a balloon and then letting it go, allowing it to drift away. If you can do this, you are more likely to attain serenity. This returns us to the last stage of grief—**Hope**. Let’s talk about that now.

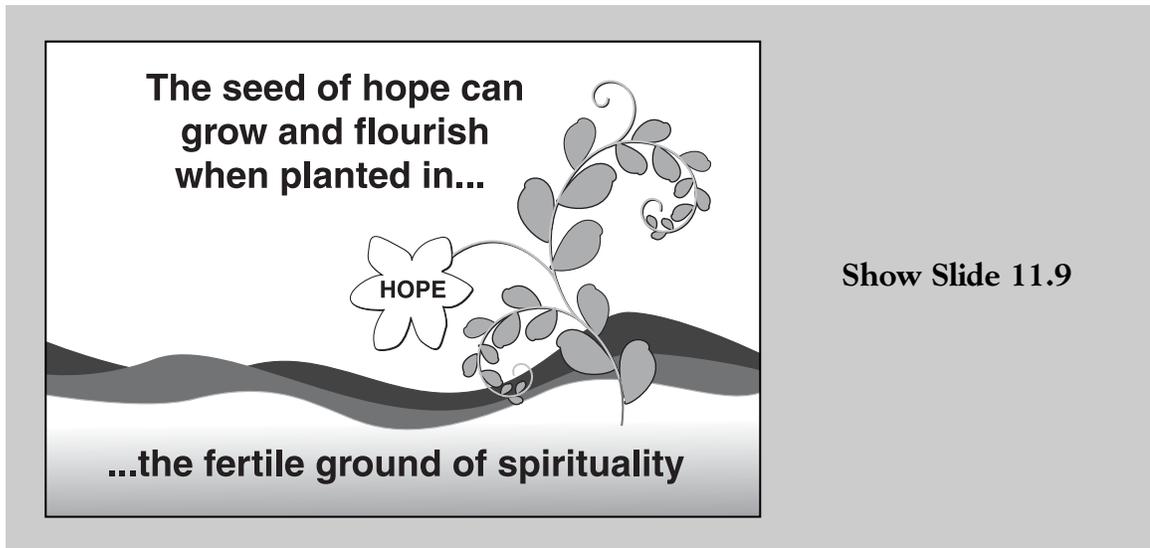
Counselor leads discussion on spiritual growth. (5 mins)

Verbal/
Discussion

Mind, body, and spirit are closely interwoven, with each influencing the others. Some people believe that you cannot have healing on the level of the body without healing on the level of the mind and spirit. The term “spiritual” is often confused with formal religion. However, spirituality is not confined to one set of beliefs, doctrines, experiences, or forms. Spirituality is an essential part of who and what we are and what we value. It is therefore profoundly personal, and means something different for every person. Some people experience their spirituality by believing in a power greater than themselves. For some people, spirituality means feeling a connection

with all things in creation. Some people believe that their spirit is the very core of their being and that their body is a shell or temporary home for their spirit.

Visual



As the slide shows, whatever spirituality means to you, getting in touch with and strengthening your own spirit **can provide a fertile place in which hope can be planted and can grow and flourish.**

So, what does spirituality have to do with hope and HIV and addiction?

Being confronted with a serious health problem, like HIV and addiction, often creates motivation to grow spiritually. When faced with a potentially life-threatening illness, individuals may search for peace and hope and meaning in their lives. There seems to be great wisdom in this for many reasons. There is evidence from research that strong spiritual and/or religious beliefs and optimism are associated with recovery from addiction and with better medical and psychological health. In contrast, if individuals get stuck in the early stages of grief and do not move beyond grief to **Hope**, their health may suffer. This may be due in part to impairment in immune functioning that has been found to occur when individuals grieve and to the neglect of health-promoting behaviors while grieving. As we have discussed in other groups, keeping your immune system as strong as possible and engaging in behaviors that protect your health, such as abstaining from drugs and following medical advice, is crucial for people infected with HIV. Therefore, spiritual growth may be an important component of maintaining your physical health.

So how do you begin if you want to grow spiritually?

Visual

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Prayer Find a source of support in your religious and spiritual beliefs.

Meditation Be still. Become aware of your breathing. Be truly present in the moment.

Imagery Listen to your inner wisdom. Give it a persona. Visualize this inner guide showing you the path to spiritual healing.

Ritual Perform rituals, such as lighting a candle, to symbolize your spiritual healing.

Choose a special place in your home as your meditation or prayer area. Set aside a time each day to work on your spiritual growth.

Show Slide 11.10

When you are spiritually starved, you need to begin feeding your spirit.

As shown in the slide, there are several steps you can take to promote your spiritual health. These include engaging in daily prayer, meditation, imagery, and ritual. **QUIZ ITEM**

Counselor presents information on the slide, as follows:

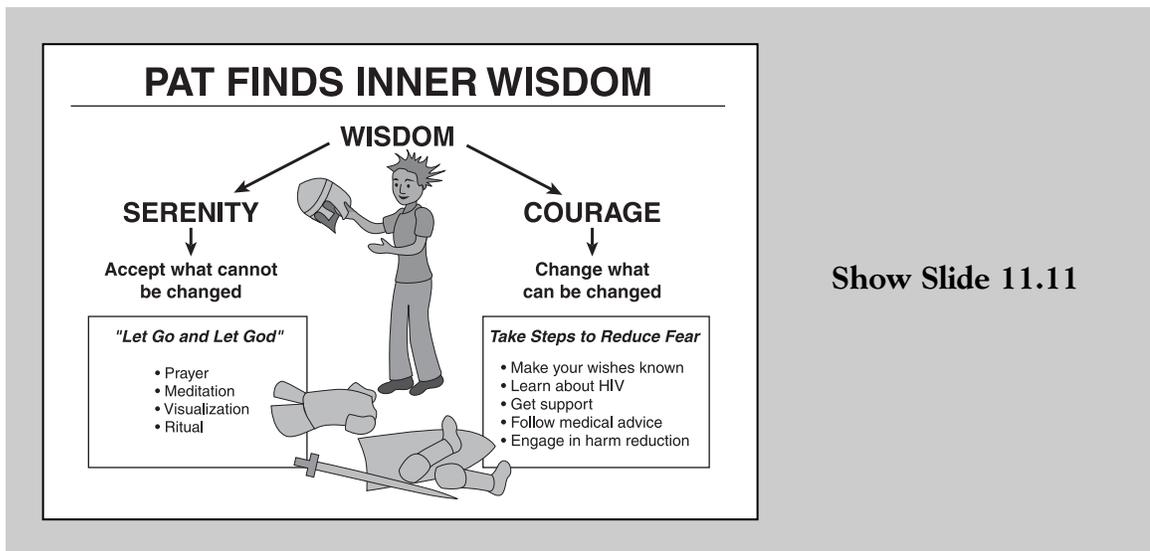
- 1. Prayer.** Prayer is any act of communion with God or a higher power. Prayer can take many forms—from recitation of formal litany to an impromptu and brief communication, spoken or unspoken. The content of a prayer may also vary, depending upon the needs of the individual who is praying, and may be a fervent request or the expression of devotion.
- 2. Meditation.** Meditation is the focusing of attention. Like prayer, meditation can take different forms. Some people meditate on a single word or mantra, some chant, some silently become aware of their breathing, or focus on an object, and some simply focus on the present moment. Meditation can be done while seated or lying down, or while engaged in an activity that is repetitive and that limits distractions. By focusing attention, the meditator becomes relaxed, centered, and is able to tap an inner source of wisdom.
- 3. Imagery.** Imagery or visualization is the process of forming a mental image (visual and/or verbal). Through imagery you can give your inner wisdom a voice and persona. You can then use this inner spiritual guide to help direct you along the path of spiritual growth.

4. **Ritual.** A ritual is a religious or solemn ceremony repeated faithfully and regularly. Rituals have been used in every culture throughout the ages to inter-connect mind, body, and spirit. Identify a ritual that is particularly meaningful to you that is used by your church or synagogue, or create a ritual that you can perform at home, such as lighting a candle or burning incense, hitting a gong, arranging flowers. As you perform this ritual, let it symbolize your spiritual healing, and take a moment to reflect on this.

Choose a special place in your home to set up a meditation or prayer area. You may also want to set aside certain times of the day for spiritual healing, such as morning upon awakening and evening before retiring.

The next slide summarizes what we have covered so far and shows what our friend Pat could have done to cope more effectively with fears about HIV:

Visual



We refer frequently to the Serenity Prayer in this program. Can you see how it applies to what Pat could have done to cope with HIV?

Counselor reads the serenity prayer to the group, as follows:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Now Pat has the **Wisdom** to know the difference between what can and cannot be changed about HIV. Pat has found the **Serenity** to accept what cannot be changed, by “letting go and letting God.” Pat has also found the **Courage** to change what can be changed by taking action. Now our friend Pat is able to work effectively on physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

Counselor presents material on humor and healing. (5 mins)

**Didactic/
Discussion**

Many people have suggested that laughter may also promote mental, physical, and spiritual health. It is recommended that you make a list of movies, comedians, books, and cartoons that make you laugh. If you have access to the internet you also have access to sites that give you a joke a day and other humorous materials. Humor can also be a healthy way to temporarily defend against fear. You can reduce the power of fear by learning to laugh at yourself and your fears. So, watch, read, or listen to something you find funny every day to bring laughter into your daily life.

Counselor distributes the “epitaphs” handout.

The handout I’ve just distributed presents examples of epitaphs on tombstones that came from actual grave sites across the country and around the world.

Let’s go around the room, and take it in turn to read one of the epitaphs. I’ll start.

Counselor begins by reading the first epitaph on the handout, and then asks each group member in turn to read one of the remaining epitaphs aloud to the group until all are read. Counselor encourages group members to have fun with the epitaphs.

Let’s play our game now.

TEAM GAME: “Remember me by what I valued”
(Total time 20 mins – Part I, 5 mins; Part II, 10 mins; Part III, 5 mins)

**Experiential/
Team Game**

Aim:

- To identify what you value
- To get to know others by what they value
- To encourage group sharing, humor, and social interaction

Materials:

- “Remember me by what I valued” team game worksheet (cut into Parts I and II)
- Pencil/pens
- Hats or containers (one for each team)
- Timer
- Prizes (e.g., bubbles, balloons, “spiritual” stickers)

Counselor distributes the top half (Part I) of the worksheet and reads instructions for Part I as follows:

Part I. (total 5 mins)

Instructions:

1. There are three parts to today’s game.
2. The purpose of the first part is to help you reflect on what you value in your life.
3. I want you to pretend that your house is on fire.
4. You have time to save the **three things in the house that are most important to you**. All your loved ones and pets are safe so you don’t have to worry about saving them.
5. You will have three minutes to write down on the piece of paper the name of these three things that you want to save. Don’t put your name on the paper. When you have finished, fold the paper in half and then half again, and don’t let anyone see what you wrote. Then wait for further instruction. I will then explain Part II of the game.
6. Okay, begin now: Write the three things you would want to save from your burning house.

Counselor starts the timer. At the end of three minutes, Counselor calls time, instructs group member to fold their paper in half and then half again. Counselor then reads instructions for Part II, as follows:

Part II. (total 10 minutes)

Instructions:

1. I am going to divide the group into teams and I will provide each team with its own container and a Worksheet.
2. Team members will then place their folded pieces of paper in their own team's container.
3. One member of each team will then select a piece of paper from the container of one of the other teams, such that each team will have the folded paper belonging to one of the other teams.
4. Each team will then be asked to pretend that the person who wrote the items on that piece of paper actually went into the burning house to get these three things and was presumed to have perished. All that could be found when the fire went out was this folded piece of paper (our pretend "victims" will be relieved to hear that they actually survived the fire and that they also saved their three items).
5. It is the team's task to work together to write an epitaph for the presumed "victim" of the fire based on what he or she identified as the three most important things to be saved from the burning house.
6. Points will be awarded for the most creative and amusing epitaph and for including some reference to each of the three items in the epitaph. As compensation for being selected from the hat to be the presumed "victim" and subject of the epitaph, a bonus point will be awarded to that person. Another bonus point will be awarded for team participation if the team members work well together and everyone makes some contribution.
7. You will have 10 minutes to write the epitaph and then we'll take 5 minutes to read the epitaphs and select a winner. Each member of the winning team will get a prize. Have fun with it. Remember humor can be healing on many levels.

Counselor divides the group into small teams (3-4 people per team) and distributes Part II of the worksheet and a container to each team. Counselor instructs the teams to place their folded pieces of paper from Part I in their own container. Counselor then instructs one member of Team#1 to reach into the container of one of the other teams and select one folded piece of paper. Each team does this IN TURN so that only one piece of paper is selected from each of the containers and that no team selects from its own container. Counselor then instructs the teams to begin writing the epitaph.

While the teams write the epitaphs, counselor writes the scoring criteria on the board, as follows:

Scoring Criteria:

	Score
Did epitaph include a reference to all 3 items? (1 point for each item included, and 1 point bonus for all 3)	(max.4)
Rate level of creativity on scale from 0 to 4: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 0 1 2 3 4 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> not at all slightly moderately very extremely </div>	(max.4)
How funny was the epitaph on a scale from 0 to 4? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 0 1 2 3 4 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> not at all slightly moderately very extremely </div>	(max.4)
Sub-total:	(max.16)
Bonus points: (1 point for participation of team members)	(max.1)
Grand Total	(max.17)
Part III. (5 mins)	

Counselor calls time after ten minutes and asks each team to read its epitaph. Counselor asks the "victim" on each team to identify him/herself and to participate in scoring the epitaph.

Counselor totals each team's scores and awards prizes to each member of the winning team.

Quiz

QUIZ WITH IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK (5 mins)

As you know, we end each group with a quiz and a 10 minute relaxation exercise. I'm going to pass around the quiz now.

Counselor distributes the quiz (attached), and reads the items aloud, providing sufficient time for group members to mark their answers.

Detailed feedback:

Counselor re-reads each item aloud to the group, providing the correct answer after reading each item.

1. Is grief a normal human response to loss of any kind? The answer is **(a)** true.
2. Which of the items listed is a stage of grief? The answer is **(d)** all of the above—denial and anger, bargaining and depression, acceptance and hope are the 6 stages of grief.
3. Which of the statements listed is true about fear? The answer is **(d)** all of the above—fear can lead to self-fulfilling prophecy; fears may not accurately reflect reality; and fear can prevent you from protecting your health.
4. Which of the items listed describes a healthy way to reduce the power of fear about HIV? The answer is **(c)** become knowledgeable about HIV and its treatment. The other statements are **not** healthy ways to reduce the power of fear.
5. Which of the items listed is a way to grow spiritually? The answer is **(e)** all of the above—prayer, meditation, imagery, and ritual.

STRESS MANAGEMENT/RELAXATION EXERCISE (10 mins)

Stress Management

We are going to conclude by doing a brief relaxation exercise. I'll be dimming the lights and playing an audiotape. I'd like you to get comfortable in your chair, uncross your legs, and sit quietly with your eyes closed and just follow along with the tape. Remember that learning to relax is a skill that takes practice, so if you feel restless at first, just remind yourself that this is a 10 minute gift of quiet time that you give to yourself and to the other members of the group. As we've discussed in this group, this and similar techniques can be extremely useful to you if you incorporate them into your daily life. Learning to relax and to be at peace can reduce the power that fear has in your life, and help move you beyond grief to hope. With practice, it can help put you in touch with your inner guide—that source of wisdom that is within each of you that can guide you towards better physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Counselor dims the lights, says "quiet please," and begins the tape.

END SESSION