

ROADWORTHY · FREE SELF GUIDED PROGRAM · MODULE 5 OF 7

Grief with no funeral.

This week runs quieter than the others, and that's deliberate. Four modules of tools have been building toward tonight, because tonight we name the thing most of this program has really been about. Take your time with these pages. Nothing here needs to be shared unless you choose to.

The loss that doesn't get a name

Your kids are alive and well and somewhere across town — and you're grieving them anyway. Psychologists call it ambiguous loss: grieving someone who is still living. It's recognised as one of the hardest kinds of loss a human being can carry — harder, in some ways, than death — because it has no ending. When someone dies, the loss is terrible but it's closed: a funeral, a ritual, a community that acknowledges what happened, a grief with somewhere to go. When your kids are out of reach, the loss stays open. They're at school right now. They're having birthdays. And you're grieving them in real time, with no ending to grieve toward.

There's a second layer, and for most men in this position it's done as much damage as the first. Researchers call it disenfranchised grief: grief the world doesn't recognise, so you're never given permission to feel it. Nobody brings a casserole for this one. Mates don't know what to say, so they say nothing. The system treats it as a legal matter, not a loss. Some people quietly assume you must have done something to deserve it. So you've been carrying a full sized grief with none of the support that normally comes with one — and probably wondering why you're not coping the way you think you should.

You're not going mad. You're grieving in a situation that gives grief nowhere to go. Men in your exact position describe the moment someone finally names this as pure relief — and the research backs them: having this loss named and explained is itself one of the most powerful interventions there is. Tonight, it gets somewhere to go.

PART ONE

The open case file.

Why the 2am ambushes, months or years in? Why does a school photo or an empty seat at the footy drop you without warning when you thought you'd adjusted? Module 3 gave you the mechanism: your brain treats an unresolved loss the way it treats any unsolved problem — it keeps the case open, and it keeps pulling the file. That's not failure to move on. There is no “on” to move to while the loss stays open; a healthy brain returning to an open loop is a healthy brain doing its job. Once you understand that, the ambushes stop being evidence that you're broken and become what they actually are: the engine working hard on a problem it can't solve alone.

Grief in work clothes

Here's the part that reframes years for a lot of men: grief in blokes often doesn't look like sadness. It wears work clothes. It looks like a shorter fuse, longer hours, another beer, the shed, the group chat you stopped answering, the flatness where the fire used to be. If you've been angrier, quieter or more checked out than usual — maybe for a long time — you may not have an anger problem or a motivation problem. You may have a grief that was never allowed to be one. Check it against your dashboard from Module 2: for many men, two or three of those five lights have been grief the whole time.

Workshop exercise 5.1 – what mine wears

Private page. Which work clothes has your grief been wearing — and for how long? Write plainly. “That's grief, not rage” from Module 2 applies here more than anywhere.

PART TWO

Carrying it without it flattening you.

The goal isn't closing a loss that won't close, and it isn't “moving on.” It's carrying — grieving and functioning, both at once, some days badly, most days well enough. Four practices, each one tested by men in your position. You'll choose one to run this week.

1. Give it a regular appointment. Grief that's allowed some room takes less by force. Ten minutes, a few times a week — the drive, the shed, a walk — where you let it be what it is instead of pushing it down. Scheduled grief sounds strange until you notice the 2am ambushes easing. (It's the park it protocol's older brother.)
2. Keep one thread alive. Letters written and kept, a journal addressed to your kids, the birthday card sent every year regardless. This isn't sentimental — it keeps your identity as their dad active and present tense, and it builds the record your adult children may one day read.
3. Stay a whole person. The matter will try to become your entire identity. Don't let it. The mates, the work, the training, the things you were before — they aren't distractions from the grief; they're the structure that lets you carry it. A man who is only his court case has nowhere to stand.
4. Tell one person the truth. Not the whole story — just the true sentence: I'm grieving my kids and it's heavy this week. Disenfranchised grief loses half its weight the first time someone hears it and doesn't flinch.

Workshop exercise 5.2 – the true sentence

Private page, never shared. Write your true sentence, and name the one person who could hear it this week.

MY TRUE SENTENCE

WHO COULD HEAR IT

MY CARRYING PRACTICE THIS WEEK (CIRCLE): 1 · 2 · 3 · 4

When it's more than grief

One boundary, said straight because you've earned straight talk by week five: grief and depression overlap, and in this situation both make sense — but they're not the same, and they're not both loads to carry alone. If the flatness has stopped lifting at all, if nothing reaches you, or if the thought that everyone would be better off without you has started visiting, that's not a light on the dash anymore. That's the engine asking for a mechanic — and pulling in is the system working, not failing. Two pathways, both built for exactly this: your GP, and MensLine on 1300 78 99 78, any hour. And tell someone close to you — a named load carries lighter than a hidden one.

THIS WEEK'S TOOL

Still standing – the weekly self check.

From tonight, this is the program's ongoing honesty instrument — two minutes, once a week, same day each week, from now on. Rate each light honestly, choose one action. The point isn't a perfect dashboard; it's an honest one, acted on early.

WARNING LIGHT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	STEADY	FLICKER	ON	REDLINE
Short fuse	Small things landing like provocation.				
Running on empty	Flat, not tired. Can't be bothered.				
Overheating	Body tense all day; sleep broken by racing thoughts.				
Withdrawing	Dodging mates, going through the motions.				
The heavy days	Grief on your chest. Hopeless thoughts louder or more frequent.				

THIS WEEK'S ONE ACTION (CIRCLE): [scheduled grief](#) · [the true sentence](#) · [letter or journal entry](#) · [train or walk x3](#) · [protect sleep](#) · [call the mate I've been dodging](#) · [book the GP](#)

The rule of two. Any light at ON for two weeks running, or REDLINE once — especially the heavy days — means the check has done its job: act now, while acting is easy. Tell someone, book the GP, or call MensLine 1300 78 99 78. That's not the wheels falling off. That's a roadworthy man reading his dash and pulling in for the service.

Knowledge check – Module 5

T / F Ambiguous loss means grieving someone who is still living.

T / F Grief that others don't recognise or permit is called disenfranchised grief.

T / F The 2am ambushes months later prove a man has failed to move on.

T / F In men, grief often shows up as a short fuse, overwork or withdrawal rather than sadness.

T / F If flatness stops lifting or hopeless thoughts start visiting, the right move is to push through alone.

BEFORE MODULE 6

One carrying practice, one Still Standing check, dashboard word rolling. You just did the hardest module. Next we turn outward — keeping your kids off the battlefield, and why that job is more winnable than you think.

Psychoeducation, not clinical treatment or legal advice. Any hour this week: MensLine 1300 78 99 78 · Lifeline 13 11 14 · Dads in Distress 1300 853 437 · Emergency 000. If hopeless thoughts are strong, don't wait for the weekly check — call now.