

Life Events Scale

This stress assessment measures the amount of change a person experienced in the previous 12 months. It is designed to predict the likelihood of illness following exposure to stressful life events. Each life event is given a score that indicates the amount of readjustment a person will likely need to make as a result of the event. Not all of the events in the scale are necessarily negative.

For each event that occurred in your life within the past year, record the corresponding score. If an event happened more than once, multiply the score for that event by the number of times the event occurred and record that score. Then total all the scores.

Life Event	Mean Value
1. Death of a close family member	100
2. Death of a close friend	73
3. Divorce of self or parents	65
4. Jail term	63
5. Major personal injury or illness	63
6. Marriage	58
7. Getting fired from a job	50
8. Failing an important project or course in school or work	47
9. Change in the health of a family member	45
10. Pregnancy	45
11. Sex problems	44
12. Serious argument with a close friend	40
13. Change in financial status	39
14. Change of career or academic major	39
15. Trouble with parents or children	39
16. New girlfriend or boyfriend	37
17. Increase in workload at job or school	37
18. Outstanding personal achievement	36
19. New Job or first quarter/semester in college	36
20. Change in living conditions	31
21. Serious argument with a boss or instructor	30
22. Getting lower evaluations/grades than expected	29
23. Change in sleeping habits	29
24. Change in social activities	29
25. Change in eating habits	28
26. Chronic car trouble	26
27. Change in number of family get-togethers	26
28. Too many missed classes or days at work	25
29. Changing jobs or schools	24
30. Minor traffic violations	23
	Total Score:

Total Stress Score

Researchers determined that if your total score is:

- 300 or more - statistically you stand an almost 80 percent chance of getting sick in the near future.
- 150 to 299 - you have a 50-50 chance of experiencing a serious health change within two years.
- 149 or less - you have about a 30 percent chance of a serious health change.

This scale indicates that change in one's life requires an effort to adapt and regain stability. Stress and feelings of loss are natural by-products of adapting. Perception is a key part of the total grief and loss experience, so an individual's perception of the event is an important variable which needs to be considered in the overall assessment. For a more complete picture of how loss has affected a person's life consider all the dimensions of health: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social.

Adapted from Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, (1967). Vol. 11, pp. 213-218.

Avoiding the Clichés of Grief

Try open-ended statements. Try to avoid telling people what they “should” or “should not” be feeling, doing, etc. Do not assume to know what someone is going through or experiencing.

1. *Cliché:* “You must be strong for your children (spouse, relatives, friends, etc).”

Instead, try: Why not share your feelings with your children? Perhaps you can lean on one another and help support each other.

2. *Cliché:* “You’ve got to get hold of yourself.”

Instead, try: “It must be so hard to keep going when you’re hurting so much.”

3. *Cliché:* “You are holding up so well.”

Instead, try: “Would it help to talk about how you’re feeling?”

4. *Cliché:* “Time will heal.”

Instead, try: “You must feel as if this pain will never end.”

5. *Cliché:* “You’re young, and you will be able to make a new life for yourself.”

Instead, try: “You must miss your loved one and the life you had together; I do, too.”

What to Say

I’m sorry.

I’m sad for you.

How are you doing with all this?

I don’t know why it happened.

What can I do for you?

I’m here and I want to listen.

Please tell me what you are feeling.

This must be hard for you.

What’s the hardest part for you?

I’ll call tomorrow.

You must really be hurting.

It isn’t fair, is it?

You must really feel angry.

Take all the time you need.

What Not to Say

I understand how you feel.

Death was a blessing.

It was God’s will.

It all happened for the best.

You’re still young.

You have your whole life ahead of you.

You can have other children.

You can always remarry.

Call me when I can help.

Something good will come of this.

At least you have another child.

She/he led a full life.

It’s time to put it behind you.

Be strong!

Courtesy, Archdiocese of Omaha, Family Life Office

Self-Care Ideas

Adapt your priorities and expectations

- Each day plan what is most important to you
- Alter schedule to plan for difficult tasks
- Make yourself a priority
- Accept less than perfection from self and others
- Know that others are also working with this client

Adjust your attitude

- Talk with others who are doing similar work
- Open up your outlook – often we see what we look for
- Stop “awefulizing”
- Acknowledge value of “small acts” and witnessing, listening, validating, caring

Act out of caring and respect for you

- Balance “being” and “doing”
- Be vulnerable and human
- Reward and reinforce yourself and those around you
- Say “no” sometimes
- Take your turn

Acclaim your achievements and strengths

- Choose a “strength for the day” to focus on and enjoy
- Keep a journal of your accomplishments and experiences
- Recognize your skill and give yourself credit
- Acknowledge and save compliments

Acknowledge your own needs

- Accept that you have needs – physical, emotional, spiritual
- Recognize limitations as acceptable
- Try to be aware of your “buttons” and loss history
- Talk about your feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, etc.
- Take breaks, meditate, relaxation, imagery throughout the day

Activate your support system

- Know where your supports are
- Develop a nurture network
- Find a way to recognize, replenish, reward yourself each day
- Know what your personal warning signs are and confront first signs of stress
- Use journaling, art work, hobbies, exercise, vacations, cry
- Network with other team members
- Go to conferences and professional meetings

Courtesy Debbie Mattison, LMSW, UM School of Social Work

Grief: Suggestions for Finding a Support Group or Therapist

Receiving support from others who have experienced a loss along with receiving professional support can help us cope with a loss. It may seem a daunting task to find the appropriate support group or therapist. Many local religious leaders or places of worship, hospitals, treatment centers, hospices, and funeral homes have lists of support groups. Even if you or your loved one was not a patient or client of these organizations most are open to community members and are willing to assist you with identifying support options.

Most types of loss have specific web sites (ex: Suicide, Miscarriage, Substance Use); these sites often have helpful suggestions for support groups, agencies, and networks. Ask friends, family or peers who are also experiencing the same loss for recommendations of groups or therapists.

Another way to identify therapists in your area is to contact your health care provider (doctor/clinic) or health insurance provider (ex: Blue Cross Blue Shield, BCN, HAP, Medicaid HMO, etc. often have mental health services numbers on the back of their cards). Under the Affordable Care Act insurance companies are required to cover mental health services. However, the number and type of visits covered will vary by plan. Contact your plan for more information.

In the Ann Arbor area there are several community agencies and groups that may be able to assist you with finding a group or therapist; below are a few of these agencies:

Affordable Care Act information: <https://www.healthcare.gov/do-marketplace-insurance-plans-cover-mental-health-and-substance-abuse-services>.

Arbor Hospice: <https://www.arborhospice.org>.

Ann Arbor Area Therapeutic Resources: <https://www.therapeuticresources.com/supportmichigan.html>.

Ele's Place: Children Groups & Support. <http://www.elesplace.org>.

Families Against Narcotics Northwest Wayne County Support Group for Those Who Have Lost Loved Ones to

Addiction: 734-612-5301 or nwwayne@familiesagainstnarcotics.org.

<https://www.familiesagainstnarcotics.org/northwest-wayne>.

Grief Net: Adult Groups - <http://griefnet.org/support/groups.html>. Children's Groups - <http://kidsaid.com>.

Grief Recovery After Substance Passing: Michigan chapters in Taylor, Grand Rapids and Ionia. <http://grasphelp.org>.

Grieve Well: (734) 975-0238. Offers peer support and workshops, located Washtenaw County. <https://grievewell.com>.

Michigan Mental Health Networker, Washtenaw County:

http://www.mhweb.org/washtenaw/selfhelp_index.html (mutual aid index)

http://www.mhweb.org/washtenaw/therapist_indx.html (therapist index)

New Hope Center for Grief Support: Christian organization in Northville. 248-348-0115.

<http://www.newhopecenter.net>.

Opioid Overdose Grief Group: Professionally facilitated group help in Novi. (248) 599-2440.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/groups/opioid-overdose-grief-group-novi-mi/66772>.

Proud Parents of Loss: support groups for parents who lost a child of any age/for any cause. Meets at St. Joe's hospital in Ypsilanti. <https://www.proudparentsofloss.org>.

Psychology Today Grief Support Therapists: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/groups/grief/michigan>.

St. Joseph Mercy Behavioral Health: 734-786-2301 or 1-800-289-0014.

<http://www.stjoesannarbor.org/behavioralhealth>.

University of Michigan Health System Psychiatry: <https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/psychiatry>.

734-764-0231 or 1-800-525-5188. 24-hour Psychiatric Emergency: 734-936-5900.

Washtenaw County Community Mental Health: 734-544-3050 or 1-800-440-7548 (24 hours.)

<https://www.washtenaw.org/839/Community-Mental-Health>.

Children & Grief

Children's experience of loss and grief can differ from an adult's experience. Knowing how a child's developmental stage affects his/her understanding of and ability to cope with loss is important. This knowledge will help you provide the most meaningful and effective support to your child. Speaking with your child's health care provider regarding his/her response to loss can be a helpful place to start. Pediatricians can assess whether a child's response is normal or if professional support/counseling is needed. Additionally, it can be beneficial to involve the school counselor or social worker; they can also assess for coping and identify support/counseling resources. Below is a list of resources for helping adults to better understand children's grief, and options for how to support children through the grieving process.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx.

Arbor Hospice

<https://www.arborhospice.org/our-care-services/pediatric-programs>.

Barr-Harris Children's Grief Center

<https://barrharris.org>.

Ele's Place

<https://www.elesplace.org>.

Michigan Mental Health Networker, Washtenaw County Child & Adolescent Services

http://www.mhweb.org/washtenaw/child_index.html.

The Children's Room

<https://childrensroom.org>.

The Dougy Center

<https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/how-to-help-a-grieving-child>.

Uplift Center for Grieving Children, Teens, and Families

<http://grievingchildren.org>.

Additional Grief and Loss Resources

Compassion Books: <http://www.compassionbooks.com/store>.

American Society of Suicidology: <https://www.suicidology.org>.

Center for Loss and Life Transition: <https://www.centerforloss.com>.

Compassionate Friends: Supporting a Family after a Child Dies: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>.

Crisis, Grief & Healing: <https://webhealing.com>.

Griefnet: <http://www.griefnet.org>.

BOOK SUGGESTIONS:

Book recommendations from GRASP (Grief Recovery After Substance Passing):
<http://grasphelp.org/resources/book-recommendations>.

Additional book suggestions:

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs. Abbot, A., NASW. 2010.

Beyond Tears: Living After Losing a Child, Revised Edition Paperback. Ellen Mitchell, Rita Volpe, Ariella Long, Phyllis Levine, et al. 2009.

Books to Help a Child Cope with Separation and Loss: An Annotated Bibliography 4th ed. Rudman, M.K., Gagne K. D., Bernstein, J.E. 1994.

Brent's World. Barb Smith.

Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy. Worden, J. William. 2008.

Handbook for Mortals: Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness. Lynn, J. and Harrold, J. 1999.

Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas After Your Child Dies (Healing a Grieving Heart series.) Alan D. Wolfelt PhD. 2002.

Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss, Revised Edition. Jarratt, C.J. 1994.

Living When a Loved One Has Died. Earl A. Grollman. 2014.

Necessary Losses. Viorst, Judith. 2002.

The Grieving Child. Fitzgerald, Helen. 1992.

When a Child Dies from Drugs: Practical Help for Parents in Bereavement. Pat Wittberger and Russ Wittberger. 2004.