

Tree of Life Workshop

for Bereaved Families: Part 1

You are going to draw a 'tree of life', YOUR tree of life. You can be as creative as you like, hold the paper in whichever way you choose. You can make your tree out of words or symbols, it can be bold and full of colour, or a simple sketch. There is no right or wrong; this is your special tree, just as wonderfully unique as you.

The different part of your tree will represent different parts of your life.

FRUITS

These represent the **gifts** that you have been given, by others in your life. They might be physical or life skills that you have been taught, or other gifts including kindness and care.

LEAVES

These represent the most **important people** in your life, they may have supported you, loved you, encouraged you, or supported you in different ways.

BRANCHES

These represent your **hopes**, dreams, wishes and aspirations. They might be in the near or distant future.

TRUNK

This represents **your skills**, talents, attributes, personal characteristics that you feel are positive. eg. kindness, creativity etc.

ROOTS

These represent where you **came from**, the family history, culture, and ancestry that feels important and makes you feel proud.

GROUND

This represents your **life now**, where you live, who you live with, your favourite places to be, or things to do, songs to hear etc.

Optional once your tree has been drawn:

STORM(s): Your storms represent the challenges in life. They may look or feel different for everyone. They may be accompanied by difficult emotions such as pain, sorrow, fear or anger.



Tree of Life Workshop for Bereaved Families: Part 2

In small groups of 3 or 4 we are going to share the story of our 'tree of life'. In this safe space we are able to explore without judgement and listen with respect and empathy.

Top Tip: Try to work with someone you don't know.

Take turns in being:

The story teller – introducing your tree of life

The interviewer – helping the story teller to explore their tree of life

The observer(s) – bearing witness to the powerful story being shared. How does the story teller's story make you feel? What are you learning about them or from them? Share your observations to your story teller at the end of the session. It can be very healing and empowering to see your story being held and valued by others.

Tips for the interviewer

There may be something about your partner's tree that inspires you to find out more, or something they say that feels helpful to go into more deeply, but if you are unsure here are some examples of helpful things you might like to ask:

ROOTS

- Is there anything about your roots that is very special to you or that you particularly proud of that you would want to share with us
- Who or what has helped you to understand these aspects of your life and identity?
- How have they helped you to understand about your history, heritage etc?
- Why do you think they may have wanted you to learn these things?
- Have you shared this with anyone etc?

GROUND

- What makes _____ special to you?
- Is there a particular person that you normally share _____ with?
- If it is something the person is able to share with you, such as a song or a dance, or a poem, invite them to do so if they would like to.
- What role does tis play in your life?

Continued...

TRUNK

- Where did you get these skills?
- Who in your life passed these skills on to you?
- Tell me a story about how they passed these skills onto you?
- What do you think made this person or these people to pass these skills onto you?
- How do you think this person or these people would feel knowing that you are putting to use the skills that they passed onto you?

FRUITS

- Who gave you these gifts?
- Why do you think that they give you these gifts?
- What is it that these people saw in you that made them want to give you these gifts?
- What did they appreciate about you?
- What gift did you give to them or other people in your life?
- How do you plan to use these gifts?

LEAVES

- What makes these people important to you?
- What are their hopes for your life?
- How does knowing that you are important to these people make you feel?
- If they were hear today what do you think they would say about what makes you important to them?

BRANCHES

- Who or what introduced you to these hopes and dreams?
- What steps or actions are you taking to realize your hopes and dreams i.e. to make sure that they come true.
- Who else in your life knows that you have these hopes and dreams? How do they know this?

STORMS

- What would you like to share with others who could be going through storms or through hard times?
- What did you notice others do during the storms and who or what stood out for you?
- Do you know when a storm is imminent?
- What can you do during the storm to protect yourself and others?
- Who do you talk to during hard stormy times?
- Who stands with you during stormy times?

