

32 Managing grief and loss



If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, these three exercises and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on pages 124-126 and page 128. These three exercises assume you have completed exercise sheet 1 **Starting an activity journal**.

Identifying the range of losses

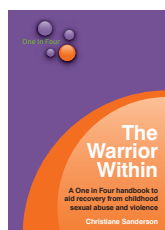
To identify the range of losses, think about and make a list in your journal of all the losses you have experienced. This could be recorded in two lists. One list can represent losses in the past while the other represents losses in the present or that you face during your recovery. Remember that many of the losses associated with CSA are symbolic such as the loss of innocence, loss of childhood or loss of self-discovery of sexuality. Some are still present now such as loss of control over your body, loss of well-being or belief in a future without pain or abuse. Look at your lists and reflect on what feelings emerge and note these. Next explore on how you have managed feelings of loss in the past. Did you avoid your feelings or did you try to connect with them, did you reach out to others or did you withdraw from them? How you would like to be in the future?

Understanding the impact of loss

Look at your list of losses and make two columns in your journal, one headed 'Things I miss' and one headed 'Things I don't miss'. Enter your losses under these headings to help you identify those losses that still hurt and those losses that you have let go of and do not miss. It is also important to consider any losses you might sustain whilst making changes during your recovery and to grieve these. These can also be divided into those things that you will miss and those you will not miss.

Reclaiming your losses

To reclaim losses, look at your list of losses and highlight those losses that you can replace. In identifying those things that were missing in childhood you will be able to consider how you can balance them now. Make a list of the losses that can be reclaimed and how you can introduce these into your life now. For example, if your losses include lack of security it is important to find sources of safety and security in the present. If you avoided people in the past you could develop friendships now. If you never felt 'special' you could ensure that you do things now that make you feel special.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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