



The Grief Toolbox

oscillate between loss and restoration



Student: Puck Verbeek

Coach: Daisy Yoo

Executive Summary

You are at the start of reading the final report of Puck Verbeek's Final Bachelor Project at the department of Industrial Design. This project was conducted over the course of one semester, from February 2024 till June 2024.

The project started off with a design brief from We Are Social Rebels, to design an experience to present during the mental health week Eindhoven in May, with this year's theme The Mental Gym. Out of personal interest the topic of grief was chosen. This topic was first explored by researching bereavement and bereavement design, grief frameworks, and grief rituals. This was followed by benchmarking existing therapy tools and grief games.

An initial meeting was held with grief therapist Simone van Beek. Where she introduced grief frameworks, she explained what a therapy session looks like, and introduced grief tools she uses during her practice. Simone explained the dual process model and shared valuable insights. The idea of creating a grief map specifically for TU/e students was selected to continue working on.

The use of soft materials to create a TU/e grief map was explored for the midterm demoday. The map would be used to help students navigate through their grieving process. As the current grief map is seen as overwhelming and hard to understand. Altering the map to students needs and using the TU/e map as a place of recognition.

However, during the midterm demoday and after expert interviews mixed feedback was received. The project goal needed to be clarified and feedback on the current grief map was asked. As it became clear that students aren't familiar with grieving techniques the project goal shifted from guiding students through their grieving process to familiarizing students with grieving techniques to better understand their mourning feelings. The general goal of the project was therefore to familiarize people with the Dual Process Model of Grief. With this the idea also shifted from redesigning the grief map to the grief toolbox.

After ideating and iterating the grief toolbox, scale and information leaflet were created. These were evaluated by four therapists and two academic advisors, using the co-constructing stories method. Overall they were very enthusiastic about the project and could see immediate implementation of the tool. Some suggestions and limitations were addressed, including the transportability of the tool and the ability to use materials and tools they already have.

Future steps include more validation sessions with therapists. These should later on also be held with clients, to receive input on the therapist-client interaction using the tool. The difference between WO, HBO and MBO students could also be looked at. As there might be differences in coping with grief and the ability to reflect on their own emotions and activities.

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Prologue

The transforming practices squad focusses on solving big societal issues. Collaborating together with industries, governments, and communities to create local solutions to contribute to a larger whole. I see my role as a designer to be a social critic. I want to create experiences that start conversations and educate people about societal issues. Using design to evoke emotions, stimulate thought, and facilitate meaningful discussions. Along that I envision a future where design is recognized as a powerful force for social change, influencing policy-making within municipalities and (political) institutes (Appendix A). I believe my vision and the vision of the transforming practices squad are very well aligned, leading to the decision for this squad.

But why grief? Why did I decide to focus on grief for my final bachelor project? This was a question I got asked quite a few times this semester. I must say at first I wasn't completely sure on why I chose this topic. Did I make it too difficult for myself and should I have chosen a different topic. All kinds of questions going through my mind during this project.

The project started with my interest in designing around dementia. With my demented grandma and seeing how my parents have to deal with the big responsibilities as informal caregivers, I was interested to dive deeper into this world. The world of dementia means, slowly losing a person you have known your whole life. They are physically still present but the rest is slowly changing. At one moment you can have a super nice conversation and ten seconds later the most absurd and unrelated story is being told. Having to deal with slowly losing my grandma, I was curious to explore how I can deal with my emotions. Not only now but also later when she has passed. Can I prepare myself for this awaiting loss?

During this project I got the opportunity to explore the world of grief and learn various grieving techniques. Subconsciously I prepared myself for this awaited loss. Or at least that is what I hope. But other than that I got the opportunity to educate others on the topic as well. Hopefully after reading this report you are also informed about grief and better understand your own feelings.



figure 1: explaining the project to my grandma

Introduction

Every year 12.000 children and youth under 25 lose one parent (CBS, 2022) and 60% of college students lose at least one person close to them by the end of their academic career (Cox et al., 2015).

Grief is learning how to intertwine an irreversible loss in your life. However, grief is not only about losing a person. Different experiences can lead to grief. Think of divorce, a break up, slowly losing a person due to dementia, having to leave your home country, loss of health, losing your job, and so on. In everyday life everyone has to cope with some form of bereavement.

But do you actually know how you can cope with your grief?

Hopefully this report will help you familiarize yourself with grieving processes and the importance of a positive grieving process. This report starts by giving theoretical background information about different grief frameworks, methods and tools that are currently used. Next the design process will be explained in chronological order, accompanied by methods and a user evaluation. Finally in the discussion and conclusion reflection will be given on the project and suggestions are made for future work that needs to be done.

“We learn how to safely drive a car. So why don’t we learn how to cope with grief?”

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

Research

In order to become more familiar with grief and grief therapy, information about grief among students is shared and the current frameworks and models of grief and mourning are explained. Next important techniques used during grief therapy are explained. And finally benchmarking existing tools is done.

Theoretical background

Grief is defined and described in various ways. Grief is the price you pay for connection and can be seen as a transition period, from the moment of loss to the new beginning of the future (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2019). Grief is not only about losing a person. Different experiences can lead to grief. Think of divorce, a break up, slowly losing a person due to dementia, having to leave your home country, loss of health, losing your job, and so on. In everyday life everyone has to cope with some form of bereavement. But most importantly grief takes time and is unique for everyone. There is no 'right' way of grieving (Keirse, 2017).

Grief among students

Every year 12.000 children and youth under 25 lose one parent (CBS, 2022). Before the age of 18 around 40% of students have experienced the loss of a friend or relative (Balk et al., 2010) and 60% of college students lose at least one person close to them by the end of their academic career (Cox et al., 2015).

Youth are often not seen as grieving, because of their adolescent behavior. They mask their grief by pretending every thing is going well and they don't need any attention (Beenhakker, 2010). They don't want their parents to worry about them, as they are already grieving about the loss they experienced. Children and adolescents are excellent at protecting their parents (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2019). However, this often interferes with the emotions and feelings of the adolescents. Bereavement can cause additional distress and can contribute to mental health issues, like depression, anxiety and substance abuse (Merikangas et al., 2010; Eddinger et al., 2018). Bereavement also affects students' academic success as they have to balance grief and their academics, which can also cause additional stress (Bistricean & Shea, 2021; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Therefore it is important for students to express their emotions, to pause and think about the loss, and to learn how to cope with grieving emotions.

Research

Grief Frameworks

Dual Process Model of Grief *by Stroebe and Schut*

Stroebe and Schut developed the Dual Process Model of Grief (Stroebe & Schut, 2010). This theory explains how the grieving process has two orientations, the loss-oriented side and restoration-oriented side. The oscillation between the activities is beneficial to a positive grief process. This is often visualized using two islands at which the mourner alternately moors. Eventually more balance is created when the mourner has room for both aspects.

In principle this model suggests that we need to take time to feel the pain and emotions and to take time to distract ourselves from these emotions and pain. It is important to note that one side is not 'better' than the other (Van Wielink et al., 2017). The loss-orientation concentrates on the dealing with and processing of some aspects of the loss experience(s) itself (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). The restoration-orientation concentrates on changes, undertaking new things, and seeking distraction from the loss (Van Wielink et al., 2017). However, seeking distraction shouldn't become avoidance behaviour, as this has a negative impact on coping with mental health issues, like depression and stress (Gonzales et al., 2001; Woodward et al., 2020). The oscillation refers to the alternation between the loss- and restoration-oriented coping. This back and forth process is dynamic and helps with a positive grieving process. As the suppression of negative emotions can lead to ongoing physiological reactivity and adverse health effects, such as depression (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

In general there is a difference between grieving men and women. Women tend to be more loss-oriented and men tend to be more restoration-oriented (Maes & Modderman, 2011). Men search for distraction in work, sports and hobbies and their emotions of grief and loss are less confrontive (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Women on the other hand want to talk to others about their grief and seek comfort from their friends. However, this difference doesn't mean that men don't grief as much as women. Men just express their grief differently. The difference in grieving expressions can lead to incomprehension between the genders, when for example a couple has lost a child (Hooghe et al., 2011; Fiddelaers-Jaspers & Noten, 2012; Hooghe et al, 2018).

Research

Other frameworks

Along with the Dual Process Model of Grief there are other models and frameworks developed over the years that explain how people can best cope with grief. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was the one who introduced the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1997). These stages are there to help people frame and identify what they may be feeling. However, not everyone goes through all stages or in this order (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

Worden introduced the four tasks of mourning. These tasks are: to accept the reality of the loss; to process the pain of grief; to adjust to a world without the deceased; and to find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life (Worden, 2009). However, there is a lot of criticism on this model as this model prescribes too much about how people should grieve. The critics mention that this model suggests that grieving is similar for everyone, while every grieving process is unique. Other than that the model focuses too much on processing and letting go instead of intertwining the grief in your life (Maes, n.d.). Rouwarbeid (mourning labor) by Manu Keirse also suggests four mourning tasks, which are very similar to the tasks of Worden and is therefore not further explained (Keirse, 2017).

An Hooghe introduced the model of endangered connections. Instead of only looking at the connection you had with the deceased, this model addresses the importance to also reflect on the changing connections with the people around you. The model consists of five stages. The connection with yourself, to find the link with your own emotion and get in control of your grief emotions. The connection with the deceased, who are you without this person and which feelings does the deceased person evoke. The connection with the dense environment, how does the family handle the loss and are relationships and responsibilities changing. The connection with the wider environment, what do others expect of me and how do others look at me. The connection with existence, how do you now continue your life and life with new uncertainties (Hooghe, 2022).

Techniques

Poppetjestaal

Poppetjestaal (doll language in English) is a technique widely used by grief therapists (Werken met Poppetjes, n.d.). This technique emphasizes the importance of making the (mourning) context visual. This method puts the client in control over their own story without becoming overwhelmed by trauma reactions (De Kontekst Gooise Meren, 2021). Different symbols and attributes are used which all represent something different. The client selects the symbol, dolls, and other attributes to create the placement of their grieving situation including the other people involved. Every symbol represents a meaning, given by the client. This dynamic process gives the client trust in themselves and the ability to face reality.

One might think that this method would mainly be applicable for children. However, the examples given in the book: Poppetjestaal (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2017) explain that this method works for every age (Systeem Academie, 2021). This was confirmed when talking to therapists. This technique is often used throughout the whole therapy process. When using the method it is important to let the client look at their situation from a helicopter position. Working in the third person helps to not experience the trauma directly. Therefore the therapist has to stay in this third person perspective throughout the session. At the end of the session pictures are often taken as this makes it easier for the client to reflect on their current position within their grieving. This also allows the client to see the progress they are making over time, which has a positive influence on the grieving process (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2017).

Stapeltjesverdriet

Stapeltjesverdriet (piles of sadness) by Sabine Noten resembles the accumulation of loss experiences during life (Noten, 2020). This can be symbolized by stones. Every stone on the pile resembles an important loss (Noten, 2010). The first loss is the bottom stone of the pile. This stone is very important, as it is carrying the other stones on top (Fiddelaers-Jaspers & Noten, 2012). During therapy, the client is asked about their losses and has to build up their pile of stones, with the bottom stone being the first loss and the top stone being the most recent loss. The different losses can have different weights on life and therefore the stones can have different weights and sizes as well. In the end all stones need to be addressed and heard. So in the therapy the client and therapist start with the top, the most recent loss and slowly unbuild the pile of stones to finally discuss the first loss experience (Praktijk Amiant, 2024).

Benchmarking

Throughout therapy sessions various tools are used. The tools used during the sessions depend on the client, the clients needs, and the stage of the therapy session. As some tools are mainly used in the beginning stage where others are used in a later stage.

De Verliescirkel

by Riet Fiddeleers-Jaspers

The Verliescirkel (the circle of loss) can be used to explain the different stages of grief, especially to adolescents (Verliescirkel, 2022). For the client it is beneficial to understand where they get stuck during this process. The degree of attachment you give to something in your youth determines this for the rest of your life. The degree of attachment comes back during the grieving process (Van der Veen, n.d.). During therapy sessions the client and therapist go over the different stages and try to find out at which stage the client is stuck at that moment. The circle is then used to paint a picture of what future activities are ahead of them and how the client can emerge from the stage they are stuck in (Beenhakker, 2010).

Landkaart van Rouw

by Anneke de Leeuw

Within the field of grief therapy there are multiple grief maps made. Some focusing more on children and other more on adults. For this project the grief map made by Anneke de Leeuw was analyzed. The map is used as a tool in conversations with people who are going through grief (De Leeuw, 2023). On the map a grieving process is visualized, with various stops and activities that can be undertaken while grieving.

The client can use the map to address where they are positioning themselves at that moment or which theme is important to them. The map is used to provide a picture of what one may encounter during their grieving process. The map also makes it possible for the client to use less words to explain what they are feeling. The map can be used in individual as well as group settings, with families or classrooms (De Leeuw, n.d.).

Hart op de Tong

by Gea Stoel

Hart op de Tong (Heart on the tongue) is a therapeutic board game initially made for children of divorced parents. The game consists of six houses, with each house representing a different aspect of grief by children with divorced parents. Each house has a set of twenty questions and assignments for the kids to answer (Stoel, 2024). Later a second version of the game was made, specifically focusing on grief. The game board remained the same, however the questions and assignments were altered. Through the questions and assignments the client is working on the five grief tasks. This lowers the threshold for talking about the loss, making it easier to process the grief (Stoel, 2024). The game can be used in an individual or group setting (Böhmers, n.d.).

Design Process

The design thinking approach was taken during this project and will be discussed in chronological order in this chapter. In Appendix B a digital copy of the process book can be found.

The Brief

The project started with the project brief of We Are Social Rebels (WASR), to design an experience to present during the mental health week Eindhoven in May. This year's theme was The Mental Gym. Focused on normalizing working on your mental health, showing that strengthening your mental health is very personal, and focusing on prevention. The target group was adolescents with a special focus on men. A meeting was held with WASR to clarify the brief and to pitch the initial ideas.

The personal learning goals for this project were then reflected on and written down. From the initial interest of designing for dementia and informal caregivers, it was decided to focus on grief by students as this fitted better with project brief.

The initial brainstorming was used to generate ideas and to get a better understanding of the topic of loss and coping (Appendix B, p. 14). An elevator pitch was given to the squad about the framing and scoping of the project. Input was asked to help select a target group, to define issues occurring during grieving processes, and to understand what people are actually missing most of a lost one. From the feedback it became clear that more research into the topics of bereavement and bereavement design needed to be done.

Research

The research on bereavement (by students) and grief frameworks can be read in the previous chapter. The main insights gathered from projects done on bereavement design will concisely be shared. The research highlights the multifaceted nature of bereavement and the various ways individuals cope with loss. Studies report that spiritual or religious beliefs positively impact the grieving process (Becker et al., 2007). Memorialization objects and rituals enable bereaved pet owners to express their grief and honour their relationships with their animals. Interactive memorials, especially those simulating life-like motions and heartbeat signals, enhance reminiscence. With participants noting that heartbeat signals, in particular, deepen their connection to memories (Yi et al., 2021). Heirlooms play a critical role in remembering deceased loved ones, including sensory attributes and personal characteristics, and emphasizing the importance of physical interactions, such as touch and scent, in maintaining bonds (Beuthel & Fuchsberger, 2022). The continuing bonds theory highlights how bereavement is shaped by memory triggers encountered in daily life (Klass et al., 1996).

Innovations like the Automatic Conveyor-belt Columbarium illustrate the blend of physical and digital memorials, though they risk depersonalizing the grieving process (Uriu et al., 2018). Mosu Buddy, designed to support grieving individuals, offers interactive functionalities to help them cope and remain active (Choin et al., 2023). Memory books compiled from personal treasures offer tangible means for healing, celebrating life, and preserving family stories, while support groups provide safe spaces for expressing grief publicly (Kohut, 2021). All together, these insights emphasized the importance of personalization, interaction, and openness in navigating the bereavement journey.

Design Process

Empathizing

This was followed by having explorative talks with fellow students about their grieving experiences. The peers were asked about losses they have experienced and the impact of them. It became clear that the age at which people lose a person is very important to the impact of the grief. The older they were the more impact the loss had on them. When they had lost someone at a really young age the bond with the deceased wasn't as strong as when they lost someone as a teen. The older people get the more conscious people mourn. The things they missed most were the opportunity to have conversations, that the deceased isn't able to see the personal development, sharing the same hobbies, and dishes. It was interesting to note that they all mentioned that they didn't know how to grieve and that they found it difficult to know how to help a grieving friend or relative. From this it became clear that there is still a bit of discomfort around the topic of grief, however the students were open minded to learn about their own coping mechanisms and curious to learn if one can prepare for grief.

Carousel

During the carousel a thirty minute workshop was hosted. Peers were asked to help brainstorming, by sketching eight ideas in eight minutes. The peers were asked to visualize an installation or experience to lower the threshold between friends to openly talk about grieving needs. Afterwards the peers were asked to explain the ideas they sketched. Things like posting a letter to your lost one, making a recipe book, creating a grief walking path, and creating a communal art work came up. These ideas were used to continue brainstorming.

Rituals

Across cultures, diverse grief traditions and rituals offer ways to honour and remember the deceased. These traditions and rituals were researched and analysed to inspire (Appendix B p. 30-32). In Nepal, sky burials symbolize the return of the body to nature, while the Ngaben ceremony in Indonesia celebrates the release of the soul through cremation. In Hong Kong, scattering ashes at sea signifies the connection to water and the universe. Jewish customs include tearing clothing as a symbolic gesture of mourning, while Aboriginal Australians conduct smoking ceremonies to purify the spirit. From Japan's bon festival to Mexico's vibrant Dia de los Muertos, each tradition reflects a unique blend of reverence, commemoration, and cultural heritage when dealing with loss.

Expert Input

An initial meeting was held with grief therapist Simone van Beek. She introduced grief frameworks, like Rouwarbeid by Manu Keirse, she explained what a therapy session looks like, and introduced grief tools she uses during her practice, like the grief map. Simone explained the dual process model and shared valuable insights. Along that a brainstorming session was held. Ideas from both perspectives were shared and discussed. Finally the idea of creating a grief map specifically for TU/e students was selected to continue working on.

Design Process

Making Morning

During the making morning session of the squad the use of embroidery was explored. As one can use embroidery to write sentences and personalize items. Other than that everyone can embroider, however it requires personal attention. This would make the user think thoroughly about the loss and what memories they want to continue wearing with them. During this session a first exploration was done on the grief map, using different materials. The session led to further explorations of the grief map.



figure 2: making morning

Midterm Demoday

Punch needling could be a way to create a new map, as this allows a soft interaction for the mourner. This was explored for the midterm demoday. The TU/e map was made of soft materials for people to interact with and would be used to help students navigate through their grieving process. As the current grief map by Anneke Leeuw (De Leeuw, 2023) is overwhelming and hard to understand. The TU/e map was chosen as a recognizable area, with which the student could relate.

During the midterm demoday this idea was presented and received with mixed reactions. Some people like the use of the TU/e map while others found this triggering. The use of the realistic map would be something that needed to be argued with research. Others mentioned creating a workshop where students could create their own grief map. One could conclude that the project goal needed to be clarified and that it would be good to ask peers feedback on the current grief map.



figure 3: midterm demoday

Design Process

Validating

When asking students about the current grief map it became clear that the map was too overwhelming and students didn't know where to start or how to use it. When asked about suggestions and aspects they liked they couldn't really answer this question. From this it became clear that students in general just don't know how they should grieve and what could help them develop a positive grieving process. This was confirmed during my meetings with Bianca Rouppé from *Vereniging Leven met Dood* and Gea Stoel from *Harmony Coaching*.

Iteration

As it became clear that students aren't familiar with grieving techniques the project goal shifted from guiding students through their grieving process to familiarizing students with grieving techniques to better understand their mourning feelings. With this the idea also shifted from re-designing the grief map to the grief toolbox. The grief toolbox is a metaphor for working on your grief and having to reconstruct your life after a loss. Quick prototypes were made and tools were explored to see if more metaphors could be found. The scale was then also introduced to represent the dual process model of grief. So then both the toolbox and scale were there, however the link between the two was missing, thus an exploration began. Various scenarios were created to explore the missing link and to get inspired (Appendix B p. 69-71, 74-77, 80 & 83-85). Finally the toolbox with three drawers was created with the intention that each drawer represents a stance of the scale.

Expert Input

A new meeting was held with Simone, during which the new concept was explained. She mentioned that the most important aspect of the scale would be that it doesn't need to be in balance. It is the movement that creates resilience by the client. She liked that the tool serves as an educational tool, to familiarize people with the dual process model of grief. Other than that she gave some suggestions about the icons to use to fill the scale and that people are very well able to feel weight difference. So she addressed the importance of adding weight to the icons. This input was incorporated into the final design of the project, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The toolbox and scale were also tested by four therapists and two academic advisors, which will later be discussed.



figure 4: one of the scenarios created

Design Process

Demoday

During demoday the project was received very well. People were intrigued by the scale and interested to know what the project was about. It was noticed that people were open to know more about grief and how they could best cope with it. The activity pouches were received well, people were very enthusiastic to feel and touch them and also to place them in the scale. Overall people were very open minded and willing to learn about their grief.



figure 5: demoday set up



The Final Design

The grief toolbox and scale are used as tools to facilitate conversations with people going through a grieving process. The pouches in the toolbox are based on the theory of *poppetjestaal*, which addresses the importance of imagination in grief therapy (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2017) (Appendix B p. 100-101). Keeping the icons broadly interpretable for the client to search for their recourses. The scale is based on *the Dual Process Model of Grief*. As a scale also has two sides to oscillate between, the loss and restoration side (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

There are already various tools in the world of grief therapy. The toolbox and scale can be seen as a great addition to this world. Having a specific focus on students, using icons to resemble loss and restoration activities specifically for students. However, the tools are not limited to students only. The grief toolbox can be used to familiarize people with the dual process model of grief. Next to that the therapist is open to use additional materials and attributes they already have during the therapy sessions, as this will improve the clients experience and bereavement. The manual for the therapists can be found in Appendix C.



figure 6: search



figure 7: place

The Final Design

The Toolbox

The Grief Toolbox consists of pouches with different icons. The pouches are made from cotton and the icons on the pouches are made from felt. They are filled with filling for a soft touch. For each icon there are three different sizes of pouches, with different weights. Balancing weights are used to create a weight difference. The small pouch is the lightest, 5 grams, the middle pouch weighs 15 grams and the biggest pouch is the heaviest with 30 grams. It is up to the client to find the pouch with the icon resembling the loss and restoration activities of their grieving process. Then they can decide the amount of weight each activity feels to them. Searching the 'right' icons is part of the therapy, as this lets the client reflect on their activities.

In total there are thirty different icons. These icons were picked with the intention to resemble a certain activity or emotion. However, it was realized that the tool is not about the meaning and intention given to the icons beforehand. The tool is about the meaning the client gives to the icons. Therefore the icons are open for the interpretation of the client. There are also blank pouches in the toolbox. These are for the client to give meaning to themselves in case they find something missing.



figure 8: discuss



figure 9: cultivate

The Final Design

The Scale

During the therapy session, the client is filling the bowls of the scale with the icon pouches. One of the bowls represents the loss-oriented side and the other bowl represents the restoration-oriented side. It is up to the therapist to decide if it is better to start with the loss-oriented or restoration-oriented side.

While filling the bowls it is important to put emphasis on the oscillating movement of the scale. The oscillation resembles the resilience people have to build during their grieving process. It is important for the client to both visit the loss oriented and the restoration oriented side of grief. The scale is used to familiarize the client with the dual process model of grief, while also cultivating resilience between the loss and restoration oriented side.

When the client has filled both bowls of the scale and the therapist and client have observed the movement of the scale, it is time to discuss the activities. Again it is up to the therapist to decide whether to start with the loss or restoration bowl. The pouches can be taken out of the bowl one by one and each time the client is asked about the meaning and activity the pouch is resembling. The therapist can then also put emphasis on the difference in weight of certain activities. Why are certain activities done more than others and does this actually help the client. When the scale is in a big disbalance it can be good to discuss which activities the client could do to make the disbalance less big. The pouches can be placed on the base board of the scale so they are well visible for both therapist and client.

Disclaimer: It is important to note that the scale doesn't need to be in balance. It is important for the client to visit both sides of grief. So it is normal that the scale is in disbalance.



“A lot of people don’t know this model so this tool can be used as an eye opener to familiarize them with it.”

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

figure 10: reflect

The Final Design

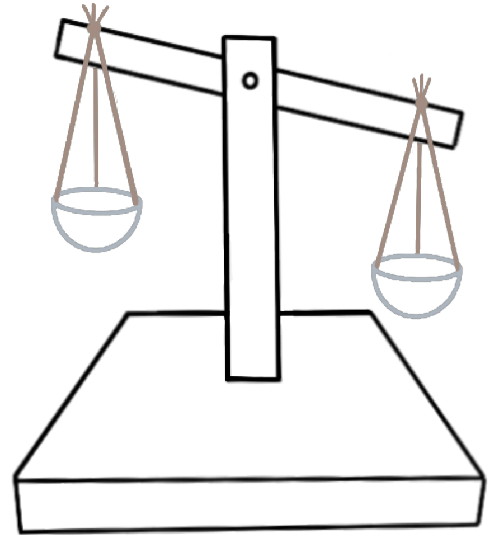
The Information Leaflet

At the end of the session when all activities have been discussed, the drawer of the toolbox opens corresponding to the stance of the scale. The drawers are held in place using solenoids. When one of the drawers needs to open the corresponding button is pushed to release the solenoids. The tension of the rubber bands ensures that the drawer opens (SEE FIG)(Appendix D). In this drawer an information leaflet is located. The client can fill in this leaflet with the loss or restoration activities, depending on what is relevant for this client. When the icons are filled in, the client can add some extra information, to remind themselves on what helps them during their grieving process. The client can take this leaflet back home to reflect on the therapy session. When the toolbox and scale are used again in a next session a new information leaflet can be filled in. In this way the client collects their grieving process over time which can help them reflect on their process. This also helps visualizing the oscillating movement of the scale to the client.

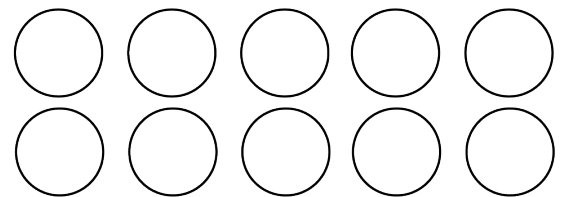
"It is beneficial to be prepared for grief and it is good to know that this model is one way to cope with it."

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

Date



Activity



Additional Information

figure 11: information leaflet

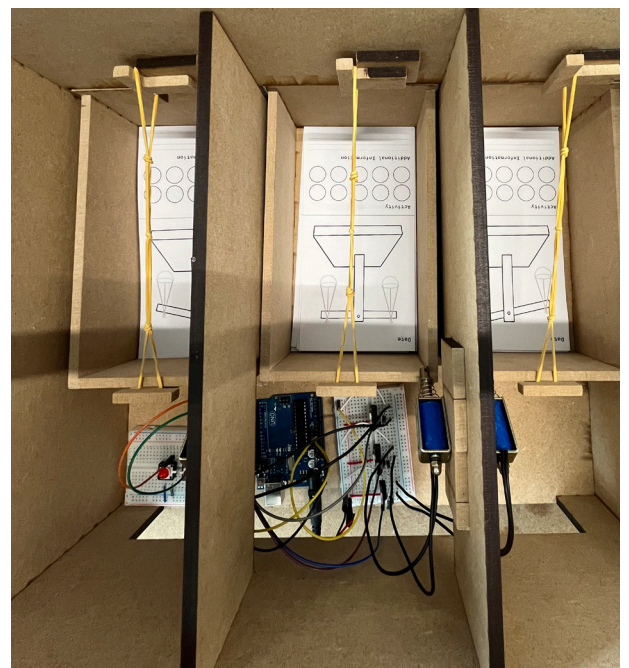


figure 12: electronic circuit in toolbox

Testing

In order to validate the concept, expert interviews were held with four grief therapists and two academic advisors. First the method used will be explained after which the feedback will be discussed.

The Co-Constructing Stories Method

The co-constructing stories method (Ozcelik Buskermolen et al., 2015) was used to obtain a better understanding of the current practices of the grief therapist and to gain better understanding of how the grief toolbox could be implemented into the therapists practice.

Usually the co-constructing stories (CCS) method is used in the early phases of the design process to obtain feedback from the end-users on the ideas and concept (Ozcelik Buskermolen & Terken, 2012). However, since it was not possible to test the toolbox with students, due to ethical reasons, it was suggested to use this method in a later stage to validate the toolbox with experts.

A CCS session consists of two phases: the sensitization and envisioning (Ozcelik Buskermolen & Terken, 2013). During the sensitization phase the experts were asked about their current practice and which tools they are already using at different stages in the therapy. During the envisioning phase a story was presented introducing the concept of the grief toolbox in the envisioned context. The experts were asked their first impressions after the story was told. Then the experts were asked to engage with the toolbox and scale in order to experience the artefact. During one session the toolbox and scale were tested by a therapist using a case study. And during another session two therapists tested the scale and toolbox on each other, recreating an actual therapy session.

Expert Evaluation

From previous interviews it was known that the Dual Process Model of Grief is already used by therapists. During the sensitization phase this was confirmed. Currently the Dual Process Model of Grief is usually visualized by using a paper with two islands and a boat oscillating between the islands (see fig. 13). Just like the current tool, it was mentioned that the toolbox and scale would mainly be used in the beginning of the therapy. To make the client more familiar with the grieving process and to visualize their grief. However, it was mentioned that they would probably refer back to the scale, by either using both toolbox and scale again or only using the pouches during a next session. So, they would use it multiple times throughout a treatment of a client.



figure 13: current dual process model tool

Testing

During the first expert interview it was mentioned that it would be nice to have something for the client to take with them. Therefore I create the information leaflets, which I gathered input on during the following interviews. The information leaflets were seen as a good tool to remind the client of their process. And instead of just taking a picture of the scale, the information leaflet would add an extra reflection moment during the session.

The big size of the base of the scale made it possible to display the pouches after the scale was filled. This was a nice addition to make the reflection discussion between therapist and client more clear. However, because of the big size the scale is not easy to move around and store. So the therapists need quite some space to place and store it. Josephine mentioned that she would like to bring the scale to information evenings to explain the Dual Process Model to teachers for example, however then a more portable size would be preferred.

During the interviews it was mentioned that it was not always clear what some icons meant and some icons were missing. Missing icons included, divorce, friendship, anger.

These icons were added at a later stage. However it was also mentioned that the icons shouldn't be too leading. It is about the meaning the client gives to the icons. Therefore the icons are open for the interpretation of the client. There are also blank pouches in the toolbox. These are for the client to give meaning to themselves in case something is missing for them.

Some general points mentioned were the need for a manual by the therapists. The fact that they liked that they can use the tools and attributes they already use during practice to fill the scale. And that they liked how they could really feel the difference in weight between the pouches. In general they were really positive about the overall looks of the toolbox, scale and pouches.

For the academic advisors the toolbox and scale were not that relevant as they are in general not going into that depth with students. They listen to the grieving students and their needs. When the student needs more support with their grief they refer the students to therapists. Other than that they were very positive about the project and they liked how the student is in charge of filling the scale and the openness of the icons.

“Really something every therapist could immediately start using.”

Astrid van den Boomen-Meeuws
Praktijk Amiant

“I would see myself using this to explain the Dual Process Model on information evenings”

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

Discussion & Future Works

When reflecting on the design process and final outcome some limitations and future actions were identified.

One can start by arguing the fact that it wasn't allowed to test the toolbox and scale on students, due to ethical reasons. This shows that the topic of grief is still seen as a difficult and sensitive topic. This is partly understandable. However, in order to educate and familiarize people with these topics it is needed to test with the actual target group for whom the tool is designed. This shows, like mentioned by all therapist spoken to, that there is still a culture of fear around grief. As everyone has to deal with some form of bereavement, why is this topic still so uncomfortable to talk about. Shouldn't a topic like this be something one can easily talk about with their friends and family? When empathizing with fellow students it became clear that they were very open to tell stories about their grief. So if students aren't uncomfortable talking about it, why is ERB?

“There is a culture of fear around grief. As if we can only talk about it together with a therapist.”

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

The testing limitations made it impossible to test the toolbox with actual clients or students in general. In the future this should be done to validate the concept. As currently the only validation is done through therapists. One therapist used a case study and two other therapists tested the concept on each other. The insights gained through this were very valuable, however more case studies need to be done. Two therapists testing the concept on each other might be a good first step to gain more insights. In this way the clients are still not involved. So the concept can be iterated and improved on without having to deal with ethical issues. Then later when the concept is tested by more therapists and approved by them one could argue to start testing with clients. At a final stage it would be nice if observations can be made during therapy sessions in order to observe how the client and therapist interact with the artefact together. This however might not be possible due to privacy legislations of therapists.

In the future it would be interesting to test if there is a difference between grief of university, HBO and MBO students in relation to the toolbox, scale and pouches. Are the icons of the pouches applicable for all the students? Do university students for example tend to do different activities than MBO students? Does the reflection level of the students differ when filling the scale? One could argue that university students might have a better reflecting abilities than MBO students. However, it is not sure if this would make a difference in the use of the toolbox, scale and pouches.

Discussion & Future Works

During the expert interviews some market opportunities and limitations were also mentioned. As the toolbox and scale are quite big it is not easy to transport them. The current version would therefore only be workable for therapists with their own practice. A future possibility could therefore be to look into the transportability of both the toolbox and scale. The toolbox can be replaced by a smaller box, without drawers, because the information leaflets don't take up much space. One could look into possibilities to make the scale smaller or to make the scale out of other material that is easier and lighter to transport, like cardboard.

On the other hand the therapists with their own practice liked how big the toolbox and scale are. One opportunity mentioned was the addition of more compartments to store other tools and attributes they already have. So the toolbox becomes the box containing all the tools, instead of all the tools being stored in different boxes, they would all be stored in the toolbox.

Currently the pouches are all handmade, which is labour intensive. If the toolkit would become a reality that therapists can purchase, one would have to investigate whether the pouches can be made manufacturable. A suggestion was also made about the white fabric, as this easily gets dirty, one should also look into the washability of the pouches. As the current ones are not washable. Creating the icons from colored Perspex instead of fabric was a suggestion made. However, the soft feel is a key factor of the pouches and therefore Perspex wouldn't adhere to the playful feeling.

Finally one could look into the possibility of an app. The current information leaflets are physically filled in by the client. However, this could also be done online in an app. The client could update the activities on the scale more frequently and even share their process online. The app could perhaps make the grieving process and familiarization of the dual process model of grief more accessible. However, would people actually keep on updating the scale in the app and would they feel the need to share their process with others. This could be an interesting possibility to explore, if it could be validated by users.

"It is beneficial to be prepared for grief and it is good to know that this model is one way to cope with it."

Josephine Aerts
met Liefde

Conclusion

To conclude a reflection will be given on the adherence of the project goal and the design process taken.

Throughout the design process a design thinking approach was taken. Navigating through the iterative steps of empathizing, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing. Because of the non-chronological state of this process reflection is needed. Looking back on the project, it is believed that more reflection was needed throughout the process to better define the future steps. Feeling lost and searching for directions were sometime hard to deal with. Not knowing how one should continue and if one is on the right track. Luckily the coach meetings helped with guiding the project into the right direction. Talking to peers and discussing the project with grief therapist, Simone van Beek also helped in finding direction in the project. Their active involvement played a significant role in steering the project direction and in validating key design decisions.

In the end a high-fidelity prototype was made, providing a valuable experience according to the experts. The development of the Grief Toolbox presents an overall effective solution for familiarizing people with the Dual Process Model of Grief. The primary innovations of the toolbox lie in the applicability of the tool. Being widely applicable in various scenarios and various target groups. Leading to greater familiarization of the model.

While the outcome is seen as valuable and ready to use, there is room for improvement in usability. As the scale is quite big, it can be hard to transport. As mentioned looking into other materials, like cardboard could make the scale lighter. Another option is to make the scale smaller, but still use MDF pieces which can easily be assembled and disassembled. As MDF is sturdier than cardboard.

To conclude one can say that the project goal of familiarizing people with the Dual Process Model of Grief has been partly achieved. As the therapists mentioned the tool could indeed be used for familiarization and reflection. However, since the tool couldn't be tested with actual clients, one cannot guarantee this would actually be the case. During the final demoday one was indeed able to familiarize and educate people about the model. Hopefully the outcome and insights will serve as a source of inspiration for future developments within the field of bereavement design.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Professional Identity & Vision

Professional Identity

I see myself as a reliable, empathetic, and optimistic designer that is easy to work with, listens to others, and believes that everything is possible.

From a young age I have always been curious. Exploring the world and nature around me. Easily inspired by the things I see and experience, the people I meet and talk to, and other cultures. My curiosity makes me a creative person. I easily come up with new ideas during brainstorm sessions and throughout the process. I believe there are no bad ideas and no idea is too crazy. I approach challenges with an open mind and a determination to explore unconventional solutions. I believe that everything is possible.

I am a team player who is easy to work with. Making sure that everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings is very important to me. Respect for each other plays a major role for me. I believe you learn a lot from others. Their way of working, cultural views, and design ideas are important for me. By learning from others I broaden my skills and develop myself as a designer. During projects I believe it is important to have fun and enjoy the things I am working on. During projects I am usually the planner who keeps track of what we have done and what we still need to do. I am good at documenting the steps we have taken throughout the design process. This also ensures clarity and alignment within the team. Being an empathic person, I am able to understand my team members feelings and opinions. Nonetheless, I am well able to share my own constructive opinions and insights, contributing to successful and open team work.

I am a visionary and structured person, which makes it easy for me to prioritise the things that I need to do. Because of this I am well able to write short and long term goals and I know the importance of different tasks that need to be done. With my visionary mindset I am able to see how my design decisions and final designs will influence the future. So, while making design decisions I always think about how my choices will not only influence the project but also the future.

I am also a very visual person and I have a strong imagination. Being able to visualize my ideas immediately helps me a lot during the brainstorming and prototyping phases. Imagining how my designs could look like within the real setting helps during the design process.

I tackle problems with a hands-on user centered approach. Working with my hands and with materials helps me come up with new ideas and helps me become more creative. I create experiences that have a positive impact on the users and the world around them. Closely collaborating with the users and understanding their needs helps me creating meaningful experiences. With my empathetic mindset I am well able to resonate and understand the users.

Appendix

Appendix A: Professional Identity & Vision

Vision

I see my role as a designer to be social critic. I want to create experiences that start conversations and educate people about societal issues.

I see myself as a critical social designer that wants to make people think about societal issues. Using design as a powerful tool to educate. Educating people about social issues, to create awareness, start a conversation, and help people form their opinion. Educating people through design to create understanding of each other's views and opinions.

I vision my role to start conversations about taboos, stigma's, and social issues. Combining psychology and design to cultivate empathy and understanding between people. Using design to evoke emotions, stimulate thought, and facilitate meaningful discussions. I aim to create interactive experiences that raise awareness about pressing social issues and encourage people to form informed opinions. In the end my vision is to spark a dialogue that leads to better understanding and empathy among individuals and communities.

I vision my designs as interactive experiences. Depending on the topic the form of these experiences differ, from workshops, toolkits and games to artworks. I aim to create dynamic and engaging experiences that serve as a platform for exploration and learning, encouraging dialogues among participants.

With my designs I want to advocate for social sustainability and have a positive impact. I envision a future where design is recognized as a powerful force for social change, influencing policy-making within municipalities and (political) institutes. Using design to create awareness for social issues I want to showcase the importance to the institutes. Followed by a collaboration with those institutes, I aim to integrate social sustainability into policy making. By advocating design initiatives that address social issues, I strive to create positive, lasting impacts that uplift individuals and communities.

With my designs I want to address serious topics and issues that can be difficult to discuss. I believe that using humour and satire can lower the threshold these topics may have. Through playful exploration and satire, I want to create experiences where individuals feel comfortable confronting challenging subjects. By infusing playfulness and humour into the experiences I want to encourage curiosity and spark the desire to learn and understand more deeply. This will foster empathy, provoke thought, and ultimately lead to meaningful conversations. Leading to greater awareness and understanding of important social issues.

Appendix

Appendix B: Process Book

Link to process book:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:dcb3d095-c919-3587-a8df-3f941b446b03>

Appendix

Appendix C: Manual



Appendix

Appendix C: Manual

Manual Grief Toolbox

The Goal

The toolbox and scale are used as tools to lead conversations with people going through a grieving process. Grief is learning how to intertwine an irreversible loss in your life. Grief is not only about losing a person. Different experiences can lead to grief. Think of divorce, a break up, slowly losing a person due to dementia, having to leave your home country, loss of health, losing your job, and so on. It can also be the loss of a dreamed future, when you cannot get pregnant for example.

The toolbox and scale are based on aspects of grief that are described in literature. The theories explain how grieving people can react. The theories are not meant to explain how people should grief. The same goes for the toolbox and scale. Everyone grieves differently and therefore the toolbox and scale can be used in a way that works for them.

There are already various tools in the world of grief therapy. The toolbox and scale can be seen as a great addition to this world. Having a specific focus on students, using icons to resemble restoration activities specifically for students. However, the tools are not limited to students only. The grief toolbox can be used to familiarize people with the dual process model of grief.

The Theory

In the following subchapters I will explain the theories I used as inspiration for my toolbox and scale.

Dual Process Model of Grief

Stroebe and Schut developed the Dual Process Model of Grief (Stroebe & Schut, 2010). This theory explains how the grieving process has two orientations, the loss oriented and restoration oriented side. Grieving is the oscillation between the two orientations. This is often visualized using two islands at which the mourner alternately moors. Eventually more balance is created when the mourner has room for both aspects. In my tool the loss and restoration sides are two bowls with one of each on the opposite side of the scale.

Appendix

Appendix C: Manual

Poppetjestaal

Poppetjestaal (doll language in English) is a technique widely used by grief therapists (Werken met Poppetjes, n.d.). This technique mentions the importance of making the (grief) context visual. This method puts the client in control over their own story without becoming overwhelmed by trauma reactions (De Kontekst Gooise Meren, 2021). Every symbol represents a meaning, given by the client. This dynamic process gives the client trust in themselves and the ability to face reality.

You might think that this method would mainly be used for children however, the examples given in the book: Poppetjestaal (Fiddelaers-Jaspers, 2017) and when talking to therapists they explain that this method works for every age (Systeem Academie, 2021). When using the method it is important to let the client look at their situation from a helicopter position. Working in the third person helps to not directly experience the trauma. Therefore the therapist has to stay in this third person perspective throughout the session. In the book and during the expert interviews it was also mentioned that pictures are often taken at the end of each session. This makes it easier for the client to reflect on their current position and being able to see the progress they are making.

Explanation and Application

The Toolbox

The Grief Toolbox consists of the pouches with the different icons. For each icon there are 3 different sizes of pouches, with different weights. The small pouch is the lightest and the biggest pouch is the heaviest. It is up to the client to find the pouch with the icon resembling the loss and restoration activities. Then they can decide the amount of weight each activity feels for the client. The search for the 'right' icons is part of the therapy session. The client has to find the icon fitting the words and activities of their grieving process.

The Scale

During the therapy session, the client is filling the bowls of the scale with the icon pouches. One of the bowls represents the loss oriented side and the other bowl represents the restoration oriented side. It is up to the therapist to decide if it is better to start with the loss oriented or restoration oriented side.

While filling the bowls it is important to put emphasis on the oscillating movement of the scale. The oscillation resembles the resilience people have to build during their grieving process. It is important for the client to both visit the loss oriented and the restoration oriented side of grief. The scale is a tool to familiarize the client with the dual process model of grief. In the end the scale is used to cultivate resilience between the loss and restoration oriented side.

Disclaimer: It is important to note that the scale doesn't need to be in balance. It is important for the client to visit both sides of grief. So it is normal that the scale is in disbalance.

Appendix

Appendix C: Manual

Information Leaflet

In the end when the session with the toolbox and scale has been discussed and has come to an end, the corresponding drawer of the toolbox opens. In this drawer an information leaflet is located. The client can fill in this leaflet with the loss or restoration activities, depending on what is relevant for this client. When the icons are filled in, the client can add some extra information, to remind the client on what helps them in their grieving process. The client can take this leaflet back home to reflect on the therapy session. When the toolbox and scale are used again in a next session a new information leaflet can be filled in. In this way the client collects their grieving process over time which can help them reflect on their process.

Legend of Icons

The toolbox has pouches with 30 different icons. These icons are picked with the intention to resemble a certain activity or emotion. However, I realized it is not about the meaning and intention I have with the icons. It is about the meaning the client gives to the icons. Therefore the icons are open for the interpretation of the client. There are also blank pouches in the toolbox. These are for the client to give meaning to themselves in case something is missing.

References

1. De Kontekst Gooise Meren. (2021, 29 December). Een Taal Erbij Methodiek - De Kontekst Gooise Meren | Met poppetjes. <https://dekontekstgooisemeren.nl/methodiek-een-taal-erbij/>
2. Fiddelaers-Jaspers, R. (2017). Verlies in Beeld: Therapeutisch werken met poppetjes bij verlies. In de Wolken.
3. Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (2010). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: A decade on. OMEGA-journal of Death and Dying, 61(4), 273-289. <https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.61.4.b>
4. Systeem Academie. (2021, 7 December). Systeem Academie. <https://systeemacademie.nl/een-taal-erbij/>
5. Werken met poppetjes. (n.d.). <https://werkenmetpoppetjes.nl/>

Appendix

Appendix D: Arduino Code

```
/*
 * Solenoid code to push drawers out of the toolbox.
 * When the button is pushed the corresponding solenoid pushes the drawer slightly out of the
 toolbox.
 * The user is then able to open the drawer fully and take the information out of the drawer.
 * When finished the user can close the drawer by pushing it back into the toolbox.
 */

// Assigning the Pins to the electrical parts
const int Button1=2;
const int Button2=3;
const int Button3=4;
const int Solenoid1=11;
const int Solenoid2=12;
const int Solenoid3=13;

// Defining the variables
int ButtonState1 = 0;
int ButtonState2 = 0;
int ButtonState3 = 0;

// Defining the Pin Modest
void setup(){
  pinMode(Button1, INPUT);
  pinMode(Button2, INPUT);
  pinMode(Button3, INPUT);
  pinMode(Solenoid1, OUTPUT);
  pinMode(Solenoid2, OUTPUT);
  pinMode(Solenoid3, OUTPUT);

  Serial.begin(9600); // open the serial port at 9600 bps:
}
```


Appendix

Appendix D: Arduino Code

// Defining the Loop

```
void loop(){
  ButtonState1 = digitalRead(Button1);
  ButtonState2 = digitalRead(Button2);
  ButtonState3 = digitalRead(Button3);
  Serial.print(ButtonState1);
  Serial.print(ButtonState2);
  Serial.println(ButtonState3);
  if (ButtonState1 == HIGH) { //When button 1 is pushed solenoid 1 will be pushed out so the draw
                               er is pushed slightly out of the toolbox
    digitalWrite(Solenoid1, HIGH);
    delay(3000); // After the delay the solenoid will go back to its natural state. The drawer can be
                 pushed back in its original place.
    digitalWrite(Solenoid1, LOW);
  }
  if (ButtonState2 == HIGH) { //When button 2 is pushed solenoid 2 will be pushed out so the draw
                               er is pushed slightly out of the toolbox
    digitalWrite(Solenoid2, HIGH);
    delay(2000);
    digitalWrite(Solenoid2, LOW);
  }
  if (ButtonState3 == HIGH) { //When button 3 is pushed solenoid 3 will be pushed out so the draw
                               er is pushed slightly out of the toolbox
    digitalWrite(Solenoid3, HIGH);
    delay(2000);
    digitalWrite(Solenoid3, LOW);
  }
}
```

Appendix

Appendix E: ERB Form

The link to the submitted ERB form can be found here:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:ad-67cce7-a2d0-3e58-b7d4-11ecde70bb3b>

The email response of the ERB committee:

RE: Revised ERB form application Puck Verbeek FBP ID



Severens, Marjolein on behalf of Ethics
To: Verbeek, Puck



Tue 28/05/2024 11:06

Flag for follow up.

Start your reply all with: Thank you! Thank you, I will do that. Great, thank you so much! Feedback

Dear Puck,

The ERB has reviewed your application (ERB2024ID221) and has approved under the condition that:

- The device must be checked by Dsearch
- The device can only be shown to the therapists (not the patients/clients)

Please ask if you have any questions and good luck with your research.

Dear regards,

Marjolein Severens
ERB student assistant

The check done by Dsearch:

Dsearch device check

By filling in this form I declare that the Grief Toolbox and Scale (the device) of Puck Verbeek's Final Bachelor Project are checked by the Dsearch lab.

Electrical safety checked. Only safe (low) voltages used. And not batteries.

Name: *Geert van den Boomen*

Signature: *GB*

Date: *30 mei 2024*

Appendix

Appendix F: Consent Form

The link to the consent form of the therapists:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:26c813ea-a2f9-3c2d-887b-a9ff39360634>

The link to the consent form of the academic advisors:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:1eac278d-c71f-3d24-8b4e-cc9af74fa85e>