

Chapter 7: Discovering

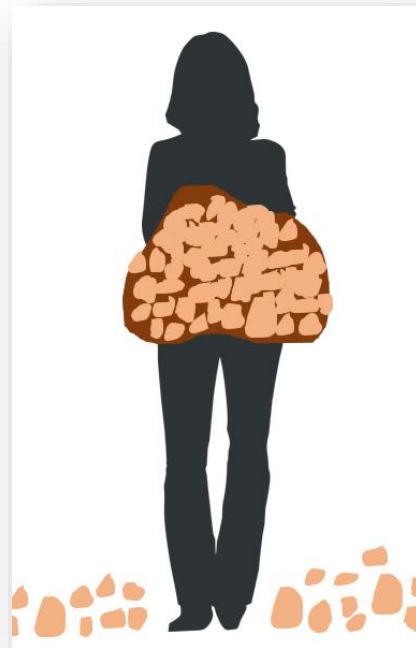
Up until now, much of the program has focused on increasing your understanding of loss and grief. You've been laying the foundation. As you increase your understanding of yourself and grief, you are already lightening the load you carry. In this chapter, you will start to apply tools that will aid you in specifically discovering and resolving the elements of your grief.

When the boulder of grief descends on you, it is weighty. Like a large boulder on a mountain path, the boulder of grief is impossible to move in one solo effort. Up until now, you have looked at your loss and grief and everything that goes along with it as one large burden that is near impossible to move.

In the Discovery phase, you will begin looking closely at the many, many pieces that combine to make up the heavy grief that you feel. Your boulder of grief is not one solid rock, but instead it is a bundle of smaller rocks, pebbles, and sand. The rocks, pebbles and sand are the circumstances surrounding the loss event including what came before, during and after; your thoughts and feelings about the loss; what you're believing about what happened and what you're believing about yourself as it relates to what happened.



This discovery process leads to resolving, which you will learn more about in the next chapter. As you start to discover and resolve, you will be chipping away at the boulder of grief. You will start to see that while the grief is impossible to move in one large effort, it is possible to improve and move forward as you address the smaller bits that make up the one big boulder. Over time and with effort the boulder of grief will be smaller to carry. Eventually you will be able to knock away most if not all the debris of the boulder. You will be able to move freely through life with no barrier to creating a life of meaning and happiness.



The step of discovering is all about identifying the smaller pieces of pain that are included within the pain of your loss. One reason that people have been unable to help you work through your grief is that they also view your grief as one big event or situation that feels impossible to move. Because your experience is unique to you, no one can tell you what makes up your personal boulder of grief. Your distinctive experiences must be searched and investigated to uncover the pieces of *your* story.

Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale

In the 1960s Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe studied the link between stress and illness. In 1967 they introduced what is now commonly called the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale. In their list of stressful life events, they identify over 40 life events that can cause feelings of stress. Many of these events also cause feelings of grief. Their research highlights the importance of defusing these emotional events to lower the stress that your body is currently carrying.

As mentioned previously, in the past you may have associated grief with only death and maybe divorce but feelings of grief can come from any type of loss.

Here is a sample list of losses that cause feelings of grief:

*Death of spouse, child, parent,
sibling, or other close family
member*

Loss of business

Death or Loss of a pet

Death of a friend

Divorce/separation/break up

Illness/Loss of health

Loss of job/career

Retirement

Abuse

*Estrangement from close
family member*

Foreclosure/loss of home

Imprisonment

Loss of financial security

Child leaving home

Moving

Loss of trust

Loss of security

As you read through this list it will trigger your memories of your own losses.

Now consider the other impactful, pleasant events that have occurred in your life. These might include:

Attendance or graduation from high school or college

Marriage

Birth or adoption of children

Home purchase

A new job or promotion

Building a successful business

A pet

Vacations

Personal achievements: awards, tournaments, etc.

You may want to refer to the above lists as you do the following assignment.

Assignment 1, Part 1:

Creating your Personal Story Timeline

1. List the loss events you've experienced and the year or your age when they occurred.
2. Add the emotions you felt at the time of the loss next to the listed loss.
3. List other impactful pleasant events, such as marriage, births, accomplishments, and the year or your age when they occurred.
4. Add the emotions you felt at the time of each of these events.

The following is an example of a sample list of loss and impactful events.

Talent show, age 8, proud

PSAT award, 16, confident

HS graduation, 18, successful

College, 18, excited

angry father, childhood,
rejected

illness, 18-21, discouraged

marriage, 22, love

brother dies, 28, confusion
devastated

birth of child, 24, love

first home, 25, thrilled

divorce, 31, shock

job and promotions, 32,
successful

marriage, 34, love devotion

parent's divorce, 35, shock
confusion

birth of child, 34, love

child dies, 40, devastated

grandchild born. 45, love
thrilled

Assignment 1, Part 2

Creating your Personal Story Timeline

In this second part you'll be adding the events you listed from the first assignment onto a timeline to create your Personal Story Timeline (PST). After the instructions below you'll find an example of a completed PST.

1. The starting point represents your birth, and the ending point represents your current age or the current year. Add "birth" to the beginning of the timeline and write your current age or current year to the end of the timeline.
2. The middle hash line is halfway. Add your midpoint age or year. For example, if you are currently 40 years old, you'll write 20 at the midpoint.
3. The other two hash lines are the halfway between the midpoint and the beginning and the midpoint and the end. These points on the graph will be reference points as you create your PST. Continuing with the example, if you're currently 40, your reference points from left to right will be birth, 10, 20, 30 and 40.
4. Add your events to your timeline rating the intensity of the event. The scale on the left is for reference to help you illustrate the impact of each event. You may find it useful to add the most impactful events first, including the most devastating loss at -10 on the timeline and your most joyful event at +10 on the timeline. Refer to the sample to see how you might include your events on your timeline.
5. List the 2-3 emotions under each event on your timeline. Use the Emotions Wheel in the Chapter 1 material to help you identify the emotions. You can repeat emotions as many times as they apply.
6. Share your Personal Story Timeline with your coach.

Tips:

- There is no right way to do this. Any way you choose to use your timeline is right for you. When you are adding events, you're comparing the emotional impact of that event against the other experiences of your life not against anything else's experiences or opinions.
- The activity will only be helpful to you if you do it and if you are completely true to your feelings. Be honest with yourself and the emotional effect of each event.
- Reach out to your coach if you have questions about completing the assignment.
- Below is a blank Personal Story Timeline. You can use the provided worksheet, or you can do this on a separate piece of paper

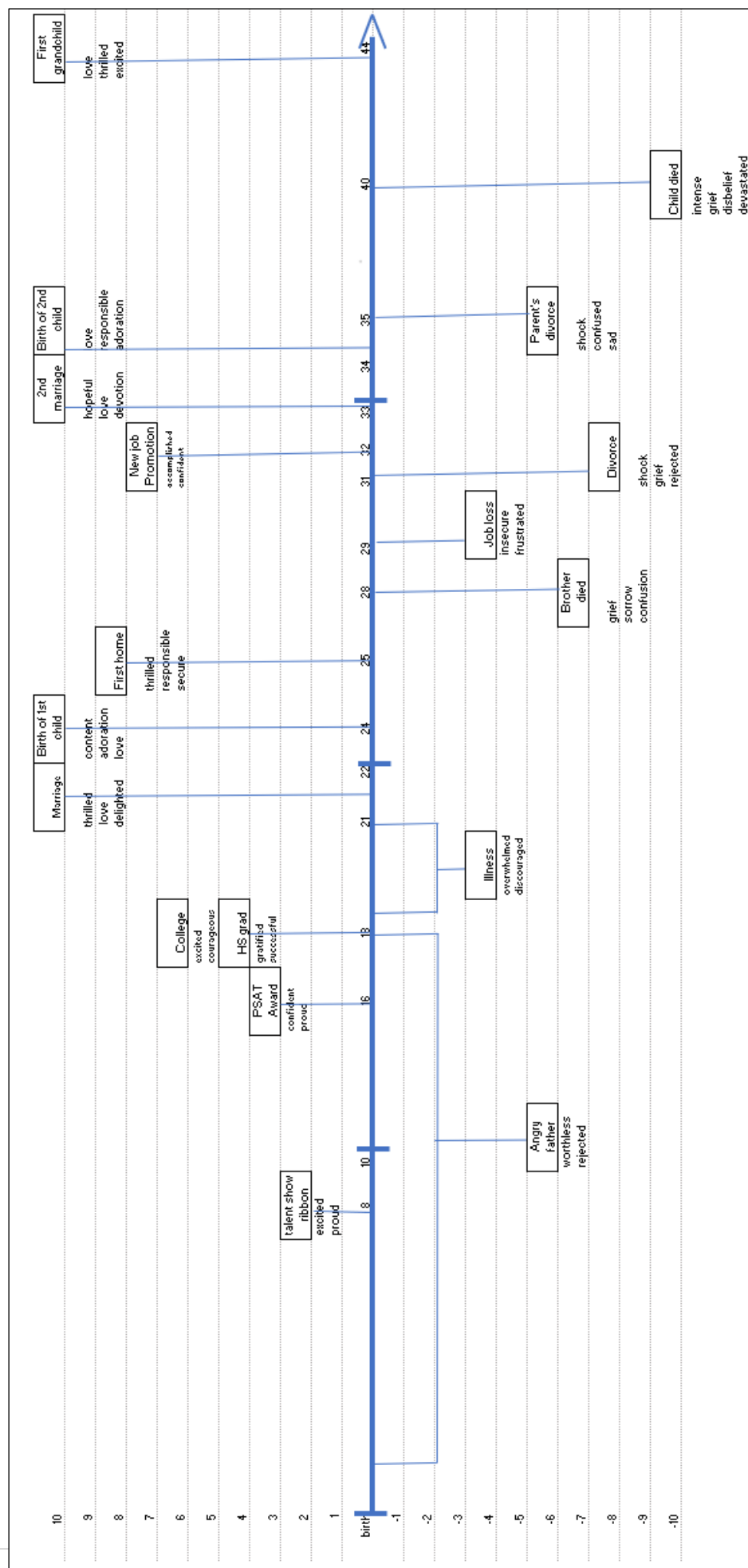
Personal Story Timeline

The image shows a worksheet for a Personal Story Timeline. It consists of a horizontal blue line with an arrow at the right end, representing a timeline. The line is marked with vertical tick marks at intervals. The background is lined paper with numbers 1 through 10 on the left side, and -1 through -10 on the right side, indicating a scale or axis.

On the next page is the sample timeline. You'll notice that the loss events are below the timeline on the scale of -1 to -10, -1 representing a loss that was less impactful and -10 representing the most impactful losses. The positive impactful events are added above the timeline on the scale of +1 to +10, 1 being less impactful and 10 being most impactful.

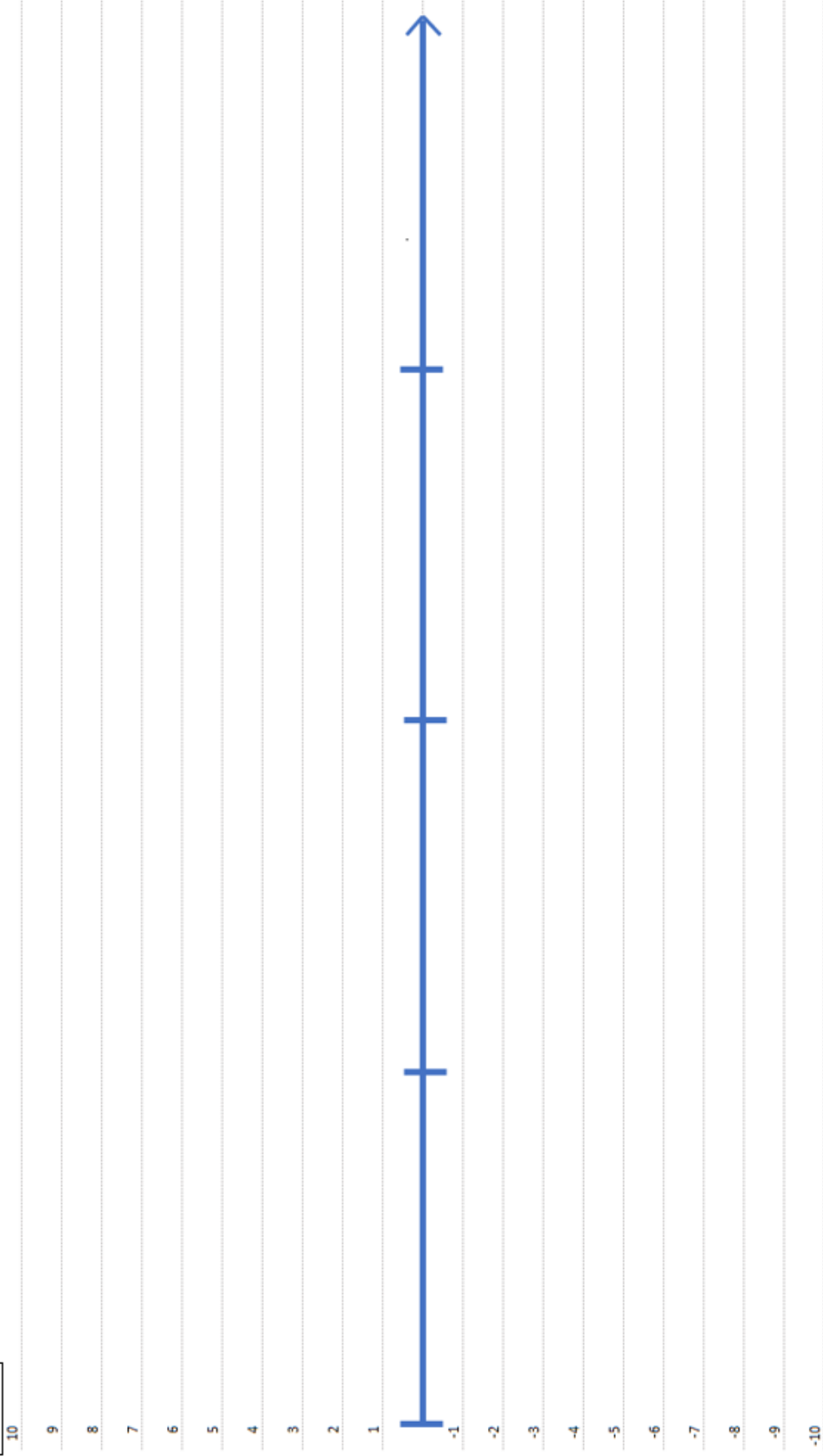
As you carefully review the sample timeline you may have thoughts like, "I would have ranked a divorce more impactful" or "if my brother died that would have been harder than a divorce." And you're right; each person will have a unique view of their life events. Therefore, it is so important to not compare your experiences to other's experiences. Instead, be authentic to yourself and honor your own experiences.

Personal Story Timeline



Personal Story Timeline

Levels



Assignment 2

Creating your Relationship Memories Chart or Map

It's time to identify what loss event you want to focus on first. When you experience loss, you are experiencing the loss of a relationship with a person. In some cases, your grief is associated with the loss of a relationship with a thing not a person, such as a job loss, loss of health or a house fire. As we review the discovery process, we will be referring to a person, but if your loss event is with something other than a person, this process will work for that as well. Just convert the person's name to the appropriate relationship.

After a loss, you have had feelings of wishing you could go back and express your feelings or change some things. You may wish you could continue to make memories with the person. Missed opportunities, unspoken communications, and unrealized dreams are all part of the boulder of grief. To uncover these pieces within the loss experience, you will be reviewing memories.

Relationships are a series of memories or experiences. It's the way you think and feel about that person. Experiences combined with emotion, good or bad, is what creates memories. When emotion is present it signals our mind to pay attention to that moment and store it as a memory for ready recall. Your memories of the relationship are containers of information about what may be left unresolved or uncommunicated.

We've provided two options for briefly recording your memories. The first is a list of memories organized in a chart. The second is organized as a mind map. Choose whichever method is most appealing to you.

Option 1: Relationship Memories Chart

1. Choose a quiet place to work where you won't be interrupted.
2. Completing your chart can be done in one session of 30-60 minutes or it can be done in a few minutes each day for 4-5 days.
3. Circle the 1-3 most difficult losses on your Personal Story Timeline. Currently, which of these three do you want to focus on healing? What relationship is central to this loss? Write that person's name at the top of the Relationship Memories Chart.
4. The Memories Chart is divided into two columns – Positive Memories, and Negative Memories. See the chart below. In short phrases, list your memories of your relationship in these two columns as the memories come to the surface. Don't judge your memories as valid or invalid. Your memories are valid.
5. In the space provided, list the Unrealized Expectations. These are the hopes and dreams you had for the future that won't happen because of the loss.
6. Share your Relationship Memories Chart with your coach.

Relationship: _____	
Positive Memories	Negative Memories
Unrealized Expectations	

Relationship Memories Chart

Relationship: _____

Positive Memories	Negative Memories
Unrealized Expectations	

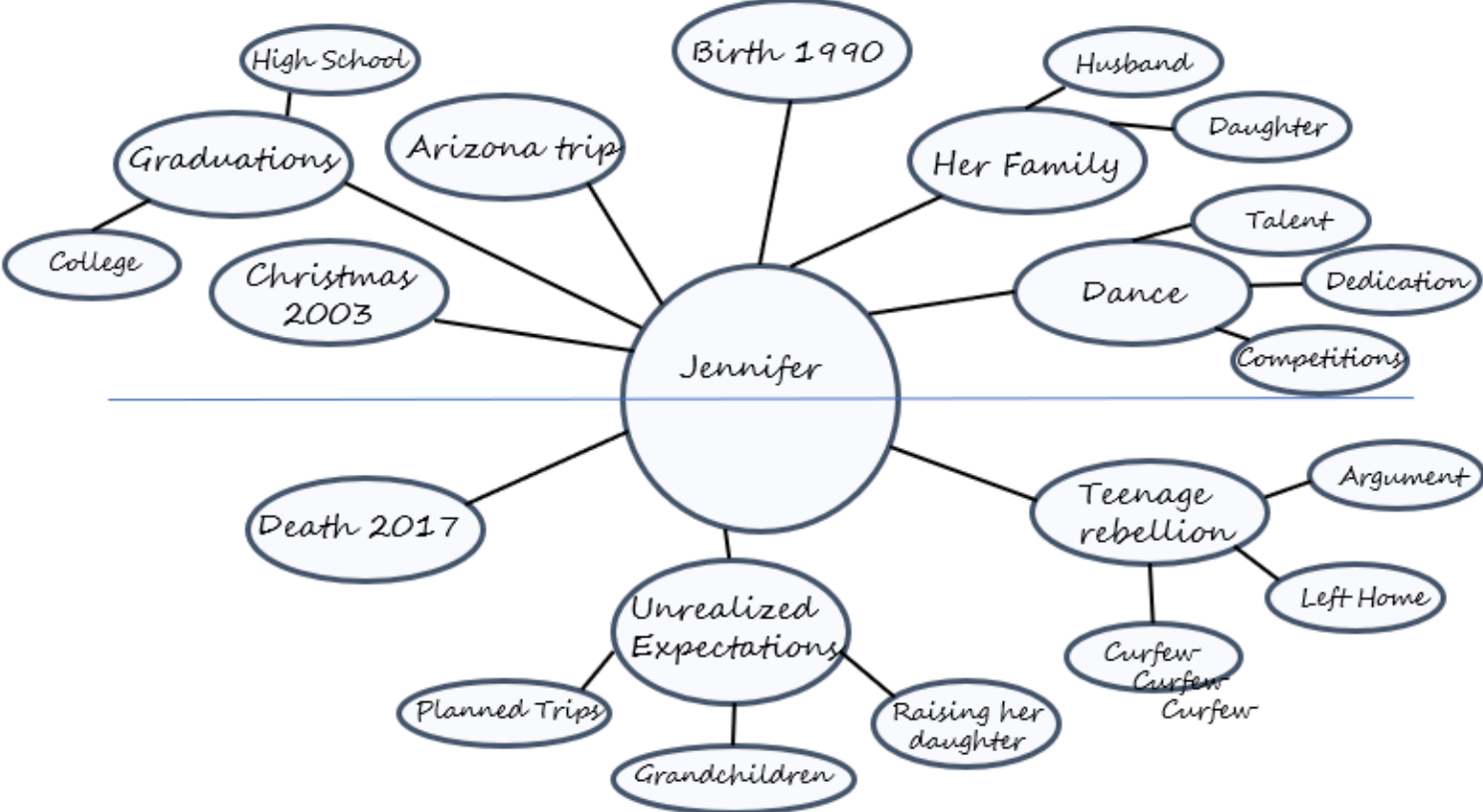
Option 2: Relationship Memories Map

1. Choose a quiet place to work where you won't be interrupted.
2. Completing your map can be done in one session of 30-60 minutes or it can be done in a few minutes each day for 4-5 days.
3. Circle the 1-3 most difficult losses on your Personal Story Timeline. Which of these three do you want to focus on healing? What relationship is central to this loss? Write that person's name in circle in the middle of your Relationship Memories Map.
4. From the central circle connect to "bubbles" of memories adding Positive Memories above the line and negative Memories below the line. You can group some memories together in subheadings. Include a subheading for Unrealized Expectations. See the example on the next page.
5. Share your Relationship Memories Chart with your coach.

Tips:

- The same tips for completing the Personal Story Timeline apply to completing your graph or map.
- Set an intention that the memories you add to your Relationship Memories Graph or Map are the memories that will help you as you heal your grief. Then trust that the stories that come up for you are the ones you needed to remember.
- Don't spend more than 1 hour on this assignment on this assignment.

Relationship Memories Map Example



Relationship Memories Map

