

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SHRINKING:

Grief, Boundaries, and the Slow Work of Healing

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this guide to talk about grief, friendship, showing up for one another, and the slow work of repair.



1. BEFORE WATCHING

Set the stage and open hearts and minds.

- What do people usually imagine grief looks like?
- Have you ever had a difficult experience that changed how you acted toward other people?
- What does it mean to help someone without trying to fix them?



2. WHILE WATCHING

Pay attention to loss, friendship, and boundaries.

- How is Jimmy's grief affecting his parenting, work, and friendships?
- What do you notice about Alice's experience of grief?
- Who keeps showing up for Jimmy when he is struggling?
- Why do Paul's concerns about boundaries matter?



3. AFTER WATCHING

Reflect together and make meaning.

- Which relationship in the story felt most healing to you?
- What role do friendship and community play in recovery?
- Why is advice sometimes helpful and sometimes harmful?
- What makes trust grow after it has been damaged?



4. FAMILY REFLECTION

Go deeper with empathy, honesty, and connection.

- Younger children**
Who helps you feel safe when you are sad?
- Older children**
Have you ever felt invisible while adults were focused on something else?
- Teens and adults**
What is one burden you tend to carry by yourself? Who is someone you could let in a little more this week?
- Try this**
Name one person who has quietly shown up for you during a difficult season and one small way you could thank them.

DR. Z TAKEAWAY

“Grief rarely heals because someone says the perfect thing. More often, healing happens because someone keeps showing up. The people who help us most are often not the people who fix our pain, but the people who stay close enough that we do not have to carry it alone.”



Small steps.
Real people.
Together.



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
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Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.

Connection heals.
Conversations help.