

Healing through Change

Art Therapy Worksheet – Grieving Parental Change

Theme: “ I still love you, even as you change. ”

Objective

To explore and express complex emotions such as sadness, anger, love, and longing that arise from witnessing a parent ’ s decline or transformation — and to rediscover inner peace through symbolic art-making.

Materials

- A4 or sketchbook paper
- Colored pencils or watercolor
- Tissue paper, magazines for collage (optional)
- Glue, scissors
- Pen for reflection

Art Directive

Step 1: The Before and After Tree

Draw or paint two trees — one representing your parent before, and one now. Focus on roots, trunk, and branches. Between them, draw a bridge, light, or river symbolizing connection or distance.

Step 2: Add Colors and Texture

Use intuitive colors — red/orange for anger, blue/grey for sadness, green/yellow for hope. Let your hand move freely.

Step 3: Write Words on the Page

Write short phrases such as:

- I miss the way you used to...
- I wish you could see how I...
- Now, I ’ m learning to...

Reflection Questions

1. What feelings surfaced while making this art?
2. What did you notice about the “ before ” and “ after ” images?
3. What does the bridge/light/river symbolize for you?
4. What do you still wish to hold onto — and what can you begin to let go of?

5. How can you offer compassion to both your parent and yourself in this transition?

Integration

After you finish, gently close your art materials. Sit quietly and place your hand over your heart. Say softly to yourself: “ I honor the love that remains, even when things change. ”

Therapist ’ s Note

This activity supports complicated grief processing, role transition, and acceptance in adult children of aging or cognitively declining parents. It integrates symbolic expression, sensory grounding, and cognitive reframing.

Created by YJ Art Therapy