

UNDERSTANDING MY GRIEF



Bargaining is often linked to feelings of **guilt** or **regret**, as we search for ways we might have **prevented the loss** or **imagine different outcomes**. These “*what if*” thoughts are a natural part of processing grief, but they can feel heavy and take up all of our focus, leading to a lot of **self-critical thoughts** and **feelings**.

This activity helps you **reframe those thoughts**, inviting you to bring in wider perspectives on your actions and choices, along with kindness. **Are there any ways to reframe the guilt thoughts you may be carrying?** Below, you’ll find examples of common “*what if*” thoughts and how they might be reframed. Then, you’ll have space to practice reframing your own or to notice what comes up when you try.

Thought...

Reframe...

If only I had spent more time
with them

Our time together was meaningful, and I showed them love
in my own way.

I should have noticed the
signs earlier.

I did the best I could with the information I had at the time.

What if I had made a
different decision that day?

I made the best decision I could, given the circumstances.

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As you reflect on your thoughts, it can be helpful to distinguish between guilt and regret. Though they may feel similar, they come from different places:

- **Guilt** is the feeling that we have done something wrong or contributed to a negative outcome. It often carries a sense of responsibility and self-blame.
- **Regret** is the feeling of wishing things had turned out differently, even if we had no control over the outcome. It's about longing for a different past, rather than believing we caused it.

Recognising this difference can help you process your emotions with greater clarity and self-compassion.

Take a moment to write down the “what if” thoughts you’ve been carrying, think about the thought is rooted in guilt or regret. Then reframe if possible – can you offer yourself a different perspective? What would you say to a friend experiencing the same thoughts?

Thought...

If only I had spent more time
with them (guilt)

I wish we had more time, there's
so much more to say (regret)

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Reframe...

I cared deeply about them, and showed love in the ways I
could. No one can predict the future. I did the best I could.

It's natural to wish for more time. I can honour their
memory by carrying forward the love they shared with me.

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