

Background

- Bereaved parents demonstrate increased risk for long-term psychological problems and poorer overall quality of life. Bereavement support programs can promote improved coping and are positively received by parents but remain underutilized.
- Virtual programs may help address barriers to accessing bereavement resources, such as families' physical distance to the hospital and trauma reactions when exposed to a setting where the child received care.
- The objective of this quality improvement study is to examine caregivers' bereavement experiences and perspectives on HOPE Group, a virtual group program for bereaved caregivers administered by the palliative care team at Nemours Children's Hospital, Delaware.

Intervention

- HOPE (Healing Opportunities through Parental Exchange) Group is a six-week virtual program informed by theories emphasizing post-traumatic growth and personal resilience to foster greater connection among bereaved parents

Eligibility Criteria

- Death occurred >6 mo. and <5 yr. from the date of the recruitment letter
- Child was alive at the time of birth
- Participants were able to speak English
- Participants had consistent internet access
- No criminal investigation in relation to the child's death

Pre-Intervention Surveys

Demographic Questionnaire, Multicultural Quality of Life Index (MQLI), Grief and Meaning Reconstruction Inventory (GMRI), Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist (HGRC)

Intervention

Facilitated by a rotating combination of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Child Life Specialist, and Ordained Spiritual Care Provider

Post-Intervention Surveys

MQLI, GMRI, HGRC, Satisfaction Survey, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Paired sample t-tests and descriptive statistics applied.

Results

- Participants included 19 bereaved caregivers ($M_{age} = 40.27$ years; 83% women; 72% non-Hispanic White). Most participants were married or partnered (83%), had a college degree or higher education (72%), and were employed (83%).
- Participants endorsed high satisfaction with both the intervention and the use of technology for intervention delivery (see Table 2).
- Participants reported significantly improved quality of life from pre- to post-intervention ($t(12) = -2.78, p = .02, 95\% CI [-.76 to -.09], d = .77$).

GMRI Score Pre and Post HOPE Group

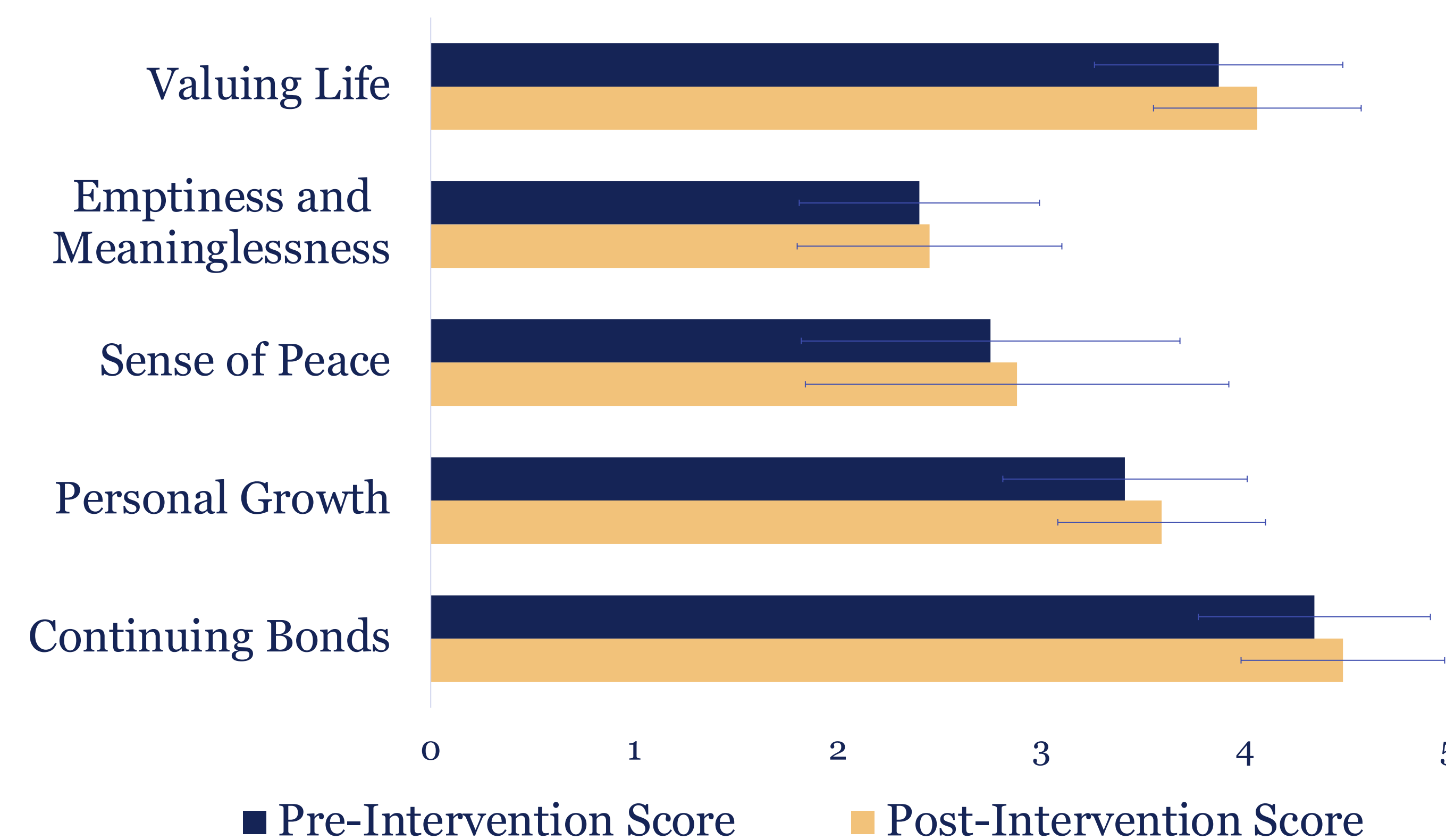


Table 1. Participants who completed both pre- and post-intervention measures ($n=13$) demonstrated moderate gains on the Personal Growth subscale of the GMRI ($t(12) = -2.34, p = .03, 95\% CI [-.36 to -.02], d = .66$). There were no other significant changes as measured by the GMRI.

Virtual Format of HOPE Group:

- All participants agreed the virtual format was acceptable and improved their access to grief support.
- Most agreed that the telehealth system was simple to use (93%) and easy to learn (93%).
- All participants felt comfortable communicating using telehealth, were able to express themselves effectively via telehealth, and would like to continue accessing telehealth grief support groups in the future.
- 36% agreed that the quality of telehealth grief support is equal to that of in-person grief support.

Feedback Survey Item

N (%) Agree or Strongly Agree

Feedback Survey Item	N (%) Agree or Strongly Agree
The timing of sessions was convenient	12 (100%)
The number of sessions offered (6) was appropriate	8 (67%)
The length of each session (90 minutes) was the right amount of time	10 (83%)
I felt that the size of the group was appropriate	10 (83%)
I felt that HOPE Group was a safe place to share my child's story	12 (100%)
I could relate to the other parents in the group	12 (100%)
I felt that the other parents in the group could relate to my experiences	12 (100%)
By participating in HOPE Group, I learned or gained something that will help me in my grief journey	11 (92%)
If offered, I would be interested in participating in another bereavement support group at Nemours	12 (100%)

Table 2. Feedback responses following HOPE Group Intervention. Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with virtual bereavement care.

Reflection and Future Directions

- Findings suggest that Hope Group is acceptable, feasible, and may positively impact grief processing and quality of life for bereaved parents.
- Several participants expressed desire for more sessions and suggested additional topics of discussion that could be incorporated into HOPE Group (e.g., self-care, loss of anticipated milestones).
- Future research with larger and more diverse samples is needed to better understand the utility of virtual bereavement support programs.

Linkage to Healthcare Disparities

- Bereavement in childhood disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous children, and adaptive parental coping after the death of a family member positively impacts child coping
- HOPE Group aims to promote equity in bereavement care for families through its free and virtual format.
- Additional research is needed to understand the impact of Hope Group on grief and coping for families from marginalized communities.