Someone I Cared About Died
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Hamilton Brant Behaviour Services

Affiliated with

Presenters

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I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou
Things To Think About

- Grief is something that everyone will encounter at some time
- There are implications for the individual who is grieving
- There are implications for those who will support the bereaved person
- What type of relationship did the person have with the deceased?

Things to Think About

- Is the person a concrete or abstract thinker?
- What stage of life is the person in?
- Does the individual have a spiritual connection?
- You don’t need to understand the concept of death, to feel the loss

Preparing Individuals for a Death Loss

- Teach about the life cycle by having a pet—e.g. goldfish
- Discuss beliefs and values
- Use tools such as movies and books
- Provide information prior to the death loss experience
The private wound is the deepest.

William Shakespeare, Two Gentlemen of Verona

Bereavement

Grief

Mourning

Overview

Bereavement: The fact of the loss

The loss of a significant relationship can often result in numerous additional losses
Overview

Grief: The response to the loss
This personal response can involve the following components:
- physical
- psychological
- emotional
- social
- spiritual

Overview

Mourning: The grief work of the loss
The readjustment of one's life without the deceased includes:
- culturally sanctioned
- disenfranchised grief

Losing someone older is like losing a piece of the past; losing someone younger is like losing a piece of the future.

Rondo
Developmental and Socio-Emotional Development

Adults with intellectual disability have lived lives and formed image of their surrounding world.

Meeusen-van de Kerkhof

Classification Denoting the Level of Developmental Disability, IQ, and Intellectual Age Equivalent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Developmental Disability</th>
<th>IQ</th>
<th>Approximate Age Equivalent (Years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>Up to 20/25</td>
<td>0 to +2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>20/25 to 35/40</td>
<td>+2 to 4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>35/40 to 50/55</td>
<td>4/5 to 7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>50/55 to 70</td>
<td>7/8 to +12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact of an Developmental Disability

How might a developmental disability affect an individual’s understanding of death?

- Death is not permanent
- People are invincible
- Questions about religion and spirituality
- Where do people go?
Death belongs to life as birth does. The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the laying of it down.

Tagore, Stray Birds

**Phases of Grief Resolution**

- Shock
- Awareness of Loss
- Conservation/Withdrawal
- Healing
- Renewal

While grief is fresh, any attempt to divert it only irritates.

Samuel Johnson
### Shock

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Restlessness
- Feelings of unreality
- Regression
- Helplessness
- State of alarm

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**
- Egocentric
- Preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased
- Psychological distancing

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**
- Dryness of mouth
- Need for sighing
- Loss of muscular power, trembling
- Weeping
- Startle response
- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of appetite

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### Awareness of Loss

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**
- Separation anxiety
- Conflicts
- Acting out - emotional
- Prolonged stress

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**
- Over-sensitivity
- Searching
- Disbelief and denial
- Sensing presence of the deceased
- Anger
- Grief
- Frustration
- Shame
- Fear of death

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**
- Yearning
- Crying
- Sleep disturbance
- Dreaming
- Sensing presence of the deceased

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**Whatever is eating you, talk it out:**

*Monsters only live in the dark.*

—unknown
Conservation/Withdrawal

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**
- Withdrawal
- Despair
- Diminished social support
- Helplessness

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**
- Hibernation - holding action
- Obsessional review
- Grief work
- Turning point

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**
- Weakness, fatigue
- Need for more sleep
- Weakened immune system

Healing

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**
- Turning point
- Assuming control
- Identity restructuring
- Relinquishing roles

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**
- Forgive
- Forgetting
- Search for meaning
- Hope
- Closing the circle

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**
- Physical healing
- Increased energy
- Sleep restoration
- Immune system restoration

Renewal

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**
- New self-awareness
- Accepting responsibility
- Learning to live without

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**
- Living for oneself
- Anniversary reaction
- Loneliness
- Reaching out
- Time for the process of bereavement

**PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**
- Revitalization
- Functional stability
- Caring for physical needs
I share with you the agony of your grief. The anguish of your heart finds an echo in my own. I know I cannot enter all you feel, or bear with you the burden of your pain. I can but offer what my love does give: the strength of caring, the warmth of one who seeks to understand the silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss. This I do in quiet ways that, on your lonely path, you may not walk alone...

H. Thurman

Preparing to Support a Bereaved Individual

• What is your own experience with death?
• What is your response to the current situation?
• Consider your relationship with the bereaved individual
• How will you, as a member of your team, support the bereaved?
• What does the bereaved appear to require?

Working Through Grief

Accept the reality of the loss:

• Feel the pain and other emotions of loss
• Adjust to life without the deceased
• Withdraw emotional energy from the deceased and reinvest it elsewhere
Working through Grief

- Rebuild one’s faith or philosophical system
- Support from others: environmental; verbal; physical
- Involve the person: religious/spiritual; ritual/tradition
- The concept of alive and death

Working Through Grief

Feel the pain and emotions of loss:

- Be present
- Support from others: observe; acknowledge and affirm; expression of feelings; religious and spiritual

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak.
Whispers the o’er fraught heart and bids it break.

William Shakespeare
**Working Through Grief**

Adjust to life without the deceased:

- Support from others: music and movement; linking object; support group; creative arts
- Rituals and traditions

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**Working Through Grief**

Withdraw emotional energy from the deceased and reinvest it elsewhere:

- Rituals and traditions
- Support from others: self-esteem; physical activities; active participation; network of relevant others

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*Neither the sun nor death can be looked at steadily.*

La Rochefoucauld
Working Through Grief

Rebuild one's faith or philosophical system:

- Support from others
- Rituals and traditions
- Values and beliefs

Our greatest glory consists not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall.

Oliver Goldsmith

Resources

- Donka, 1996. Living with Grief after Sudden Death.
Resources

- Bereaved Families of Ontario: www.bereavedfamilies.net
- Leading the way to healthy survivorship: Wendy S. Harpham, MD: www.WendyHarpham.com
- With special thanks to Sue Hutton (RSA) and Keith Anderson (HBBS) for their valuable contributions.