

Someone I Cared About Died

April 29, 2011

Hamilton Brant Behaviour Services
affiliated with
FAMILY COUNSELLING
CENTRE OF BRANT



Presenters

Jodie Petkovich, C.C.W., B.A.
Hamilton Brant Behavioural Services

Ronalee R. White, M.S.W., R.S.W.
Twin Lakes Clinical Services

*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

Level of Developmental Disability	IQ	Approximate Age Equivalent (Years)
Profound	Up to 20/25	0 to \pm 2
Severe	20/25 to 35/40	\pm 2 to 4/5
Moderate	35/40 to 50/55	4/5 to 7/8
Mild	50/55 to 70	7/8 to \pm 12

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	PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Disbelief•Confusion•Restlessness•Feelings of unreality•Regression•Helplessness•State of alarm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Egocentric•Preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased•Psychological distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Dryness of mouth•Need for sighing•Loss of muscular power, trembling•Weeping•Startle response•Sleep disturbance•Loss of appetite

Awareness of Loss

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Separation anxiety•Conflicts•Acting out - emotional•Prolonged stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Over-sensitivity•Searching•Disbelief and denial•Sensing presence of the deceased•Anger•Guilt•Frustration•Shame•Fear of death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Yearning•Crying•Sleep disturbance•Dreaming•Sensing presence of the deceased

*Whatever is eating you,
talk it out;
Monsters only live
in the dark.*

unknown

Conservation/Withdrawal

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Withdrawal •Despair •Diminished social support •Helplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hibernation - holding action •Obsessional review •Grief work •Turning point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Weakness, fatigue •Need for more sleep •Weakened immune system

Healing

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Turning point •Assuming control •Identity restructuring •Relinquishing roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Forgiving •Forgetting •Search for meaning •Hope •Closing the circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Physical healing •Increased energy •Sleep restoration •Immune system restoration

Renewal

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS	PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •New self-awareness •Accepting responsibility •Learning to live without 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Living for oneself •Anniversary reaction •Loneliness •Reaching out •Time for the process of bereavement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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

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

*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

- Adams, J. (2007). *The Dragonfly Door*. Feather Rocks Books Inc.
- Donka, 1996. *Living with Grief after Sudden Death*.
- Luchterhand, C. & Murphy, N., 1998. *Helping Adults with Mental Retardation Grieve a Loss*.
- Meeusen-van de Kerkhof, et al., 2006. *Perceptions of Death and Management of Grief*.
- Sanders, 1999. *Grief: The Mourning After* (2nd ed). Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Viorst, J. (1987). *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.
- Worden, J.W. (1991). *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*. Springer Publishing Company.

Resources

- Bereaved Families of Ontario: www.bereavedfamilies.net
- Leading the way to healthy survivorship: Wendy S. Harpham, MD: www.WendyHarpham.com
- http://www.cancer.gov/cancer_topics/when-your-parent-has-cancer-guide-for-teens.
- With special thanks to Sue Hutton (RSA) and Keith Anderson (HBBS) for their valuable contributions.
