The Many Faces of Grief

Margaret Wyche, MA, LPC, LCAS, CCS
What Is Grief?

Separation Or Detachment From Something Or Someone Of Value

Lingren, 1997
Grief Is

- A normal reaction to loss
- Universal experience---all races, creeds and cultures
GRIEF is
The Personal Experience of Loss
Grief is a Tidal Wave

that over takes you,
smashes down upon you with unimaginable force,
sweeps you up into its darkness,
where you tumble and crash against unidentifiable surfaces,
only to be thrown out on an unknown beach,
bruised, reshaped...
Grief will make a new person out of you,….

Stephanie Ericsson       Journey of Hearts.org
Grief Come in All Sizes and Shapes

From that missed important phone call
The Loss of a Beloved Pet
Miscarriage, Abortion, Adoption
Divorce
Disasters
Trauma
Health
Loss of Job—Retirement
Moving
Relocation
Marriage, Graduation
New Baby
Abuse
Domestic Violence
WAR
Addiction
Change in Financial Status
Death of a Loved One
IS ADDICTION A LOSS TO BE GRIEVED?

The act of giving up the use of alcohol, drugs and/or the addictive relationship is one of the losses that is experienced as a part of early recovery. Most alcoholic/addicts have past patterns of using substances to cope with emotional pain. In recovery, accepting pain, anger and depression and then dealing with these emotions drug-free can be very difficult. It is difficult because often it is a new task that many alcoholics/addicts have never done.
When people believe that

Individuals are better off
without someone or something
that is perceived to be destructive,
it is difficult to empathize
with the need to grieve the loss”

Disenfranchised Grief

A loss for which someone does not have the socially recognized right, role or capacity to grieve.

www.indiana.edu/~familygrf
Disenfranchised Grief Examples

- Relationship is not socially recognized
  Close friend, partner, ex-spouse
- Loss is not socially recognized or is hidden from others
  Perinatal, Abortion, Pet
- Losses from other than death—
  Divorce, mental illness, disability

www.indiana.edu/~familygrf
Disenfranchised Grief
Examples cont

Griever is not socially recognized as capable of grieving
The very old, the very young and the mentally disabled

Circumstances of the death
Suicide, abortion, AIDS, Drug OD

The giving up of drugs and alcohol

www.indiana.edu/~familygrf
THE FOUR TASKS OF MOURNING
William Worden

Task I: To Accept the Reality of the Loss
Task II: To Work Through to the Pain of Grief
Task III: To adjust to an environment in which the deceased or the object lost is missing

Task IV: To Emotionally Relocate the Deceased or the object lost and Move on with Life
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

First Stage: **Denial and Isolation**—
Denial can be away to deal with uncomfortable or painful situations. Denial functions as a buffer for unexpected shocking news.
Second Stage: **Anger**—
When first stage of denial cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy and resentment.
Third Stage: **Bargaining**—
This stage where we try entering into some sort of an agreement with God, family etc.
Fourth Stage: **Depression**—When person can no longer deny loss, the anger and rage will be replaced with sense of loss. If person is allowed to express his/her sorrow, he/she will find final acceptance much easier.
Fifth Stage: **Acceptance**—
Acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost a void of feelings. Researchers have found that those patients do best who have been encouraged to express their rage, to cry in preparatory grief, and to express fear and fantasies to someone who can quietly sit and listen.
The Process of Grief

Is not linear

Everyone has to find their best way to grieve

Grief changes us forever
The Process of Grief

The pain related to loss subsides over time as grief work is done.
When We Don’t Give Voice to Our Grief

Our grief will find other methods or ways of expression through our bodies.
Common
Feelings, Behaviors, Physical Sensations and Thoughts Associated With Grief and Loss
FEELINGS

- Sadness
- Anger
- Guilt and self-reproach
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Fatigue---Apathy---Listlessness

Feelings continued

- Helplessness
- Shock
- Yearning--- “Pining” for the loss
- Emancipation--- Freeing
- Relief
- Numbness
- Depression

Physical Sensations

- Hollowness in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest
- Tightness in the throat
- Over sensitivity to noise
- Dry Mouth

Physical Sensations cont.

- A sense of depersonalization: Nothing seems real
- Breathlessness---feeling short of breath
- Weakness in the muscles
- Lack of energy

THOUGHTS

- Disbelief
- Confusion---Difficulty concentrating
- Preoccupation
- Sense of presence
- Hallucination---Visual and Auditory

Behaviors

- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite disturbances
- Absent-minded behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Dreams of .............person, place, thing lost
- Avoiding reminders of ...

Behaviors

- Sighing
- Restless over activity
- Crying
- Visiting places or carrying objects of remembrance
- Treasuring objects that belonged to ......

Post Acute Withdrawal (PAW)

- Inability to think clearly including inability or difficulty concentrating, impairment of abstract reasoning and rigid and repetitive thinking.
- Memory problems, especially related to short-term memory.
- Emotional overreaction or numbness including mood swings, increased anxiety, intensified anger reactions and emotional shutdowns.

Sleep problems including unusual or disturbing dreams and inability to sleep and/or stay asleep.

Physical coordination problems including dizziness, trouble with balance, problems with coordination between hand and eye and slow reflexes.

Stress sensitivity including over reacting in stressful situations and inability to distinguish between low-stress situations and high-stress situations.
How do we grieve?
Myths About Children and Grief

- Children don’t mourn/grieve
- Adults can protect children by shielding them from death and loss
- Death is not a part of living

Children Express or Mask Their Pain With

- Mature-Adult like behavior
- Regressing---Reverting to old behaviors
- Tummy Aches
- Thumb Sucking
- Moodiness
- Aggression
Children Express or Mask Their Pain With

- Angry Outburst
- Tearfulness
- Anxiousness
- Over attachment---Fear of Abandonment
- Independence---Dependence
Physical Symptoms of Children’s Grief

- Symptoms with no clear underlying medical cause
- Symptoms that mimic the deceased person’s cause of death
- Worsening of existing chronic medical conditions (diabetes, asthma, etc)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network  www.NCTSNet.org
Physical Symptoms of Children’s Grief cont

- Change in compliance with usual medication regimens
- Depressed affect, changes in behavior
- Self-injurious or suicidal behaviors
5 Factors That Impact a Child’s Grief Response

1. Developmental stage and cognitive ability to understand grief
2. Necessity to regrieve as they grow and develop
3. Relationship with deceased or the loss experienced

5 Factors That Impact a Child’s Grief Response  

4. Suddenness or anticipatory nature of the death or loss  
5. Secondary losses that accompany primary loss

What Children Need

- An Adult/s that can role model healthy grief
- Role models that demonstrate that the awful feelings of grief don’t last forever
- Adults to realize that children grieve in spurts

What Children Need Cont

- Healthy ways to act out grief
- Understanding that children often grieve longer than adults
- Understanding that children need to re-grieve through each developmental stage

Adults Hide, Mask or Deal With Their Pain By:

- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, food, etc
- Shopping, working or other forms of busy behavior
- Physical illness
- Increased anxiety—panic attacks
- Increased dependence on others
Men and Grief

- Remain silent—internalize
- Engage in solitary mourning or “secret” grief
- Take physical and/or legal action—-(control and anger)
- Become immersed in activity— busy to risk taking
- Mask fear, insecurity and vulnerability

What We All Need to Grieve

- Identify and verbalize what they believe is their perceived role regarding grief
- Re-educate regarding grief—Normalize feelings, actions, behaviors, sensations
- Understand that grief is a process
- Find someone who will support them in the grief process, not tell them to get over it
- Recognize that grief is an inside job utilizing individual strengths
The Flute Player

Swallowed by a Snake

Thomas R. Golden, LCSW

Read Story
Grief is

“The most available emotional resource for personal transformation”  Lyn Prashant

“An opportunity for deepening self-awareness”  Lyn Prashant

“Grief is nature’s healing process”  John Bradshaw
The Grieving And Mourning Process

IS NOT OUR ENEMY

IT IS A SYSTEMATIC MOVEMENT TOWARD HEALING AND WHOLENESS
Grief Is Healed When We

- Are able to courageously stand in it and not run
- Are able to name it and start to know its comings and goings
- Are able to slow down our pace and find a place to experience our pain
- Are able to be in our bodies

Gaithersburg, MD: Golden Healing Publishing
Grief Is Healed When We cont

- Are able to accept it (the grief) as a temporary visitor and not think that we are our grief
- Are able to make an agreement with the part of ourselves that is the mask self, in order to access our pain
- Can discriminate the pain of grief and the pain of pain

Gaithersburg, MD: Golden Healing Publishing
Thank You
Margaret