



Grief Companion Training

The Soul of Sorrowing

Hospice Society of Camrose & District Volunteer Training

Grief Review

A Mindful Approach to Grief

Companioning the sacred journey

- is about recognizing the sacredness of, and uniqueness of each moment.
- It is about cultivating attention to each moment,
 - creating intention,
 - learning how to show up fully for our lives

JoAnn Soccato



Grief: A Universal Experience

“To spare oneself from grief at all cost
can be achieved only
at the price of total detachment,
which excludes the ability
to experience happiness.”

Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Discuss:

What does it mean to sorrow?

Grief

An *internal* process

Our reaction to a loss; the feelings and thoughts we have on the inside to having someone or something taken away from us.





Mourning

An external process



- How our sorrow is seen by others
- Influenced by cultural customs, rituals and norms.

Dr. Wolfelt states that mourning is:

crying

Journaling

telling stories

making things

support groups



talking about the loss

sharing memories

Praying

joining in ceremonies

Playfulness

Discuss:



How do we know
we are grieving?

Signs and Symptoms



- Physical
- Behavioral
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Soulful

Physical Symptoms

- Overtiredness
- change in appetite
- weight gain or loss
- loss of strength
- Headaches
- shortness of breath
- aching of the arms
- Restlessness
- vision trouble



Emotional and/or Psychological Symptoms

- Denial
- Anger
- Resentment
- Bitterness
- confusion with time
- feelings of hopelessness
- Fear
- Sadness
- Irritability
- mood swings



Social Symptoms

- Withdrawal from social activities /events
- Isolation
- reassessment of friends/activities
- energy depletion.

Spiritual Symptoms

- Despair
- shattered faith
- anger at God/institutions, spiritual confusion
- searching for meaning/purpose.



Behavioral Symptoms

- Forgetfulness
- Searching for the deceased
- Slowed thinking
- Dreams of the deceased
- Sense the loved one's presence
- Wandering aimlessly
- Trying not to talk about loss in order to help others feel comfortable around them
- Needing to retell the story of the loved one's death



**Companioning
Sorrow**

The Bereavement Caregiver as Gardener:



Grief



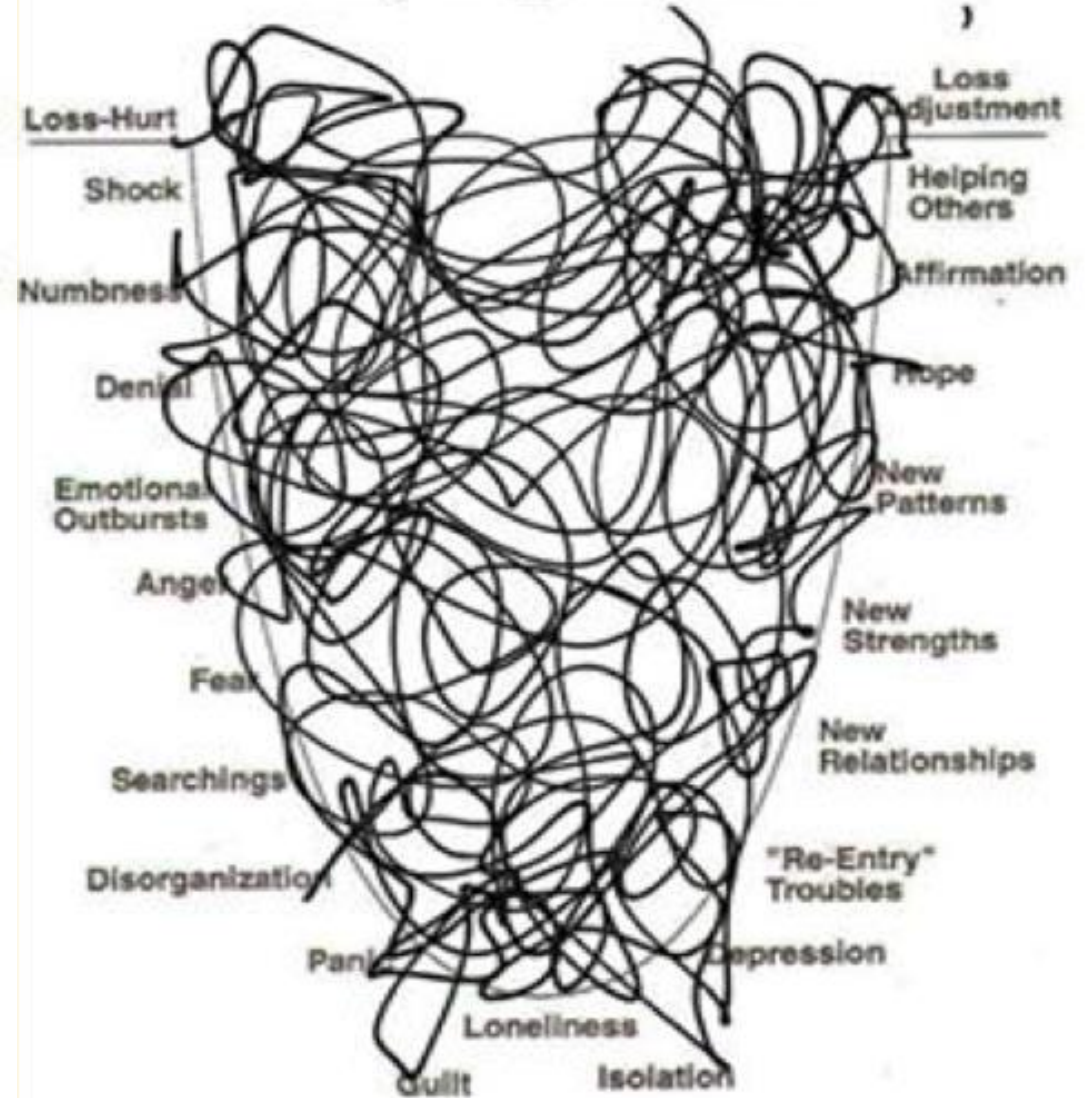
- Disease
- Dysfunctional
- Result of human weakness
- Due to lack of spirituality

STAGES OF GRIEF

The Kubler-Ross Model:
Stages of Grief



My experience



- The pain of loss will go away **faster** if you **ignore** it
- You should move **away** from grief, not toward it.
- It is important to “**be strong**” in the face of loss
- If you **don't cry** you are not sorry for the loss – tears are the only sign of grief
- **Tears** of grief are only a sign of **weakness**.
- When grief and mourning are finally reconciled, they **never** come up again.

- Moving on with your life means forgetting the loved one you lost
- Friends can help the mourner by not bringing up the subject of his or her loss
- Being upset and openly mourning means you are being “weak” in your faith.
- You should try not to think about the person who died on holidays, anniversaries and birthdays.
- After someone you love dies, the goal should be to “get over” your grief as soon as possible.

Realistic Expectations for Grief and Mourning

- You will naturally grieve, but you will probably have to make a conscious effort to mourn.
- Your grief and mourning will involve a wide variety of different thoughts and feelings.
- Your grief and mourning will impact you in all four realms of experience: physically; emotionally; socially; and spiritually.
- You need to feel it to heal it.
- Your grief will probably hurt more before it hurts less.
- Your grief will be unpredictable and will not likely progress in an orderly fashion.
- You don't "get over" grief; you learn to live with it.
- You need other people to help you through your grief.
- You will not always feel this bad.

The Soul of Sorrowing

- Sorrow happens *for* us, not *to* us
- Sorrow is not only about sadness
- Sorrow unfolds us, reveals us, ripens us

Companioning Grief

Above all, grief asks that we bear witness to its presence.

- Without an attempt to fix it
- Free from judgment

Alan Wolfelt: The Tenets of Companioning the Bereaved

1. Companioning is about **being present to another person's pain**; it is not about taking away the pain.
2. Companioning is about **going to the wilderness of the soul** with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.
3. Companioning is about **honoring the spirit**; it is not about focusing on the intellect.

4. Companioning is about **listening with the heart**; it is not about analyzing with the head.

5. Companioning is about **bearing witness to the struggles of others**; it is not about judging or directing these struggles.

6. Companioning is about **walking alongside**; it is not about leading or being led.

7. Companioning means **discovering the gifts of sacred silence**; it does not mean filling up every moment with words.

8. Companioning the bereaved is about **being still**; it is not about frantic movement forward.

9. Companioning is about **respecting disorder and confusion**; it is not about imposing order and logic.

10. Companioning is about **learning from others**; it is not about teaching them.

11. Companioning is about **curiosity**; it is not about expertise.



Top things *NOT* to say
to someone who is Grieving

What not to say...

Don't Say This	Say this instead
"I know just what you're going through."	"Can you tell me more about what this has been like for you?"
" You must be incredibly angry."	"Most people have strong feelings when something like this happens to them. What has this been like for you?"
"This is hard . But it's important to remember the good things in life, too."	"What kinds of memories do you have about the person who died?"
" At least he's no longer in pain."	"What sorts of things have you been thinking about since your loved one died?"

Don't Say this	Say this instead
<p>"I lost both my parents when I was your age."</p>	<p>"Tell me more about what this has been like for you."</p>
<p>"You'll need to be strong now for your family. It's important to get a grip on your feelings."</p>	<p>"How is your family doing? What kinds of concerns do you have about them?"</p>
<p>"My dog died last week. I know how you must be feeling."</p>	<p>"I know how I've felt when someone I loved died, but I don't really know how you're feeling. Can you tell me something about what this has been like for you?"</p>



Wolfelt: Criteria for Reconciliation

- A recognition of the reality and finality of the death (in both the head and heart).
- A return to stable eating and sleeping patterns that were present prior to the death.
- A renewed sense of energy and personal well-being.
- A subjective sense of release or relief from the person who has died (they may think of the person, but are not preoccupied with these thoughts).
- The capacity to enjoy experiences in life that should normally be enjoyable.
- The establishment of new and healthy relationships.
- The capacity to live a full life without feelings of guilt or lack of self-respect.
- The capacity to organize and plan one's life toward the future.

- The capacity to become comfortable with the way things are rather than attempting to make things as they were.
- The capacity to being open to more change in one's life.
- The awareness that one has allowed oneself to fully mourn and has survived.
- The awareness that one does not "get over grief," but instead is able to acknowledge, "This is my new reality and I am ultimately the one who must work to create new meaning and purpose in my life."
- The capacity to acknowledge new parts of one's self that have been discovered in the growth through one's grief.
- The capacity to adjust to the new role changes that have resulted from the loss of the relationship.
- The capacity to be compassionate with oneself when normal resurgences of intense grief occur (holidays, anniversaries, special occasions).
- The capacity to acknowledge that the pain of loss is an inherent part of life that results from the ability to give and receive Love.

Grief Transformations





Hospice Society
OF CAMROSE AND DISTRICT

Two Grieving Styles

Feeling Style (Intuitive)

Grief is **experienced** emotionally

- ❖ Intense feelings & Waves of emotion
- ❖ Moving forward involves exploring and expressing feeling

Grief is **expressed** emotionally:

- ❖ Venting emotion, many tears
- ❖ Feelings precede and dominate thinking and doing
- ❖ Primarily feeling sadness, despair, and loss



Two Grieving Styles

Thinking/Doing Style (Instrumental)

Grief is **experienced** in thinking:

- ❖ Trying to make sense of loss
- ❖ Feelings are limited or toned down

Grief is **expressed** in thinking and doing:

- ❖ Focused on problem solving and action
- ❖ Being physical precedes and dominates feelings



Photo by Spyros Papaspyropoulos

The Tasks of Grief:

- To acknowledge/accept the loss
- Experience the pain
- Adjust to the new environment
- Reinvest in the new reality

The Grief Process
(Worden, 1982)

Disenfranchised Grief

- “Grief experienced in connection with a loss that is **not socially acknowledged**, publicly shared, or supported through usual rituals.
- **when the relationship is not recognized** (lovers, ex-spouses, same-sex partners, close friends)
- **when the loss itself is not recognized** (stillbirth, miscarriage, abortion, adoption, pet loss)
- **when the griever is not recognized** (very young, very old, developmentally disabled, work-related death).
- **The manner of death** itself can be disenfranchising (murder, suicide, AIDS).

(Kenneth Doka, 2002)

Disenfranchised Grief

According to Dr. Ken Doka:

“this grief is experienced in connection with a loss that is not socially acknowledged, publicly shared, or supported through usual rituals.”

(Kenneth Doka, 2002)

Complicated Grief

- **Chronic Grief:** One that is prolonged, is excessive in duration, and never comes to a satisfactory conclusion.
- **Delayed Grief:** Emotion that has been “inhibited, suppressed, or postponed.” A subsequent loss may elicit an exaggerated reaction because the bereaved is grieving for two losses.
- **Exaggerated Grief:** Occurs when feelings of fear, hopelessness, depression, or other symptoms become so excessive that they interfere with the daily existence of the bereaved.
- **Masked Grief:** Symptoms and behaviors experienced by a person who does not recognize the fact that these are related to a loss.

(Worden, 2001)

Tools for Exploring Sorrowing

Plan ahead for grief “triggers”

Acknowledge your feelings

Seek Support

Express yourself through creativity

Turn to family and friends

Look after your physical health

Draw comfort from your faith.

Talk to a therapist or grief counselor.

Join a support group

Don't let anyone, including yourself,
tell you how you should feel

Discuss:

What are some of the grief experiences that are unique to grieving elders?



Discuss:

What bereavement situations do you find most distressing to deal with?

The Mourner's Bill of Rights

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

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1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.
2. You have the right to talk about your grief.
3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.
4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.
5. You have the right to experience "grief-bursts."

6. You have the right to make use of ritual.
7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.
8. You have the right to search for meaning.
9. You have the right to treasure your memories.
10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.