

GRIEF & LOSS DURING TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

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GRIEF AS A RIVER



GRIEF IN UNCERTAIN TIMES: A TSUNAMI OF GRIEFS



WHAT IS GRIEF?

- Grief is often seen as synonymous with sorrowing
- Also is defined as the response of the individual to loss.
- But there is more going on.

A DEFINITION OF GRIEF

- Grief is the *outward expression* of an *internal process* in which those who have experienced a loss progressively reconcile themselves to the loss while also reconstructing their understanding of life and its meaning.

GRIEF IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

- Affective / involves feelings (not just sorrowing)
- Cognitive / involves thinking
- Physical expression
- Behavioral
- Social / develops in a social context
- Spiritual / religious

GRIEF IS A UNIQUELY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- It's not about stages that people should expect to go through.
- The experience of loss is unique to each person, so the grief will be unique to each person.
- There are commonalities in grief and grieving, but each person will be focusing on unique aspects of the loss and their specific grief pattern will be unique to them.

GRIEF IS AN ACTIVE PROCESS OF MEANING RECONSTRUCTION

- We construct and refine meaning all the time.
- Loss is an assault on the assumptive world, core beliefs about how the world should work.
- We can't live in a world that does not make sense, and we must work to make sense of what may be senseless.
- Grief is a process of redefining normal, the “new normal,” a model of a world that we can trust.

LOSSES IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

- Losses to death and nondeath losses
- Losses tied to the pandemic

AMBIGUOUS LOSS

- Ambiguous losses are those that lack clarity and can lead to sharply different assessments of exactly what (if anything) has been lost.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND AMBIGUOUS LOSS

- Grievors need support, not only for the reality of their loss, but for the validity of their grief, themselves as legitimate grievors, and their efforts at making sense of the loss.
- Unsure of how to respond, members of the social network often do nothing.
- Without support, an ambiguous loss may become irreconcilable, with a related inability to reclaim a sense of normality.

SOCIAL SHIFTS

- May be perceived as different by social group
 - “You’re not the same as you were”
 - May be excluded or socially isolated
- May perceive self as changed
 - “I’m not the same as I was”
 - May result in self-isolation

DISENFRACTHISED GRIEF

- Losses that are likely to lead to disenfranchised grief:
 - The *relationship* is not socially recognized
 - The *griever* is not socially recognized
 - The *loss* is not socially recognized/hidden from others
 - Circumstances surrounding the loss are *stigmatized*
 - *Ways in which the griever acts* is considered inappropriate
- Fear of social stigma can lead the grievers to self-stigmatize and hide their grief

IRRECONCILABLE LOSSES

- Losses that can not be resolved
- Some examples:
 - Losses that are concerns about chronic illnesses
 - Loss of peace of mind
 - Loss of routine
- The sense that this will never stop

DIFFERENTIAL GRIEF IN FAMILIES

- Although it seems that family members should be the best resource for coping with grief, they may actually be the least able to do so.
- Differential grief - family members grieve using different styles, are at different points in their grief process, have different loss issues as well as different triggers for their grief.
- Can result in conflict but can be seen in a positive light and be seen as a resource.

DIFFERENTIAL GRIEF IN FAMILIES, SOME FACTORS

- Relationships leading into loss
- Expectations of each other
- Age and developmental stages
- Gender, gender roles, gender role expectations
- How loss is viewed by each
- Resonating grief in the family

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

- Children's grief often looks different than adult grief
- All developmental stages are capable of experiencing grief and loss
- Grief may be re-experienced at different developmental stages
- Children may feel a need to protect the adults from their grief
- Children's grief is just as individual as that of adults!

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO ARE GRIEVING

- LISTEN
- Don't make assumptions
- Don't take it personally
- Take the initiative (choices can be overwhelming)
- Be gentle and kind
- Be patient

SHARED HEALING

- Reach out to each other.
- Be sensitive to each other's needs.
- Find a shared sense of purpose.
- Help each other.
- Reframe in a positive light.
- Use shared ritual as a tool, for change, continuity, celebration and healing.

THANK YOU!

