

# Grief: Supportive Counselling in the RAAM Clinic

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Edu-Therapy Solutions  
A Cognitive Behavioral Process for healing grieving hearts

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**METAΦPHI**  
MENTORING, EDUCATION, AND  
CLINICAL TOOLS FOR ADDICTION:  
PRIMARY CARE – HOSPITAL INTEGRATION

Module 1

# GRIEF AND LOSS

# Goals: Module 1

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- Establish an environment of safety and trust for the griever
  - Communication skills
  - Build the griever's emotional investment
  - Decrease the isolation of the griever
- Engage the griever in a conversation about the loss that brought them to you
- Examples to start a conversation:
  - What brought you here...
  - Tell me what happened....
  - Tell me about your relationship with....
  - How did you meet....
  - When did you find out.....

# What we need to know

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- Grief is an emotional experience
- Each grieving experience is different
- Mourning is how we express grief
- Grief is not pathological (an illness or weakness)
- We grieve for many different kinds of losses, not just death

# Grief: What it is and what it isn't

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- Grief is the human emotional response to significant loss
- Grief is:
  - Normal
  - Natural
  - Unique to individual
  - Emotional
- Grief is NOT:
  - Intellectual
  - An illness or mental disorder
  - Reserved for death-related losses
- Grief does not follow stages or a timeline. Grief does not simply go away. You must take action.

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (1)

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## **Childhood:** Grief related to...

- Loss of trust
- A parent returns to work
- Death of a parent/caregiver
- A loss of health
- Parents' divorce
- Parent's substance use
- Loss of place when a new sibling comes along
- Family relocation
- Death of grandparents
- Foster care
- Adoption
- Loss of a pet
- Parent in military service
- Abuse: Physical, sexual, or emotional

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (2)

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## **Teenage years:** Grief related to...

- Death or suicide of a friend or influential person
- Loss of a peer to addiction
- Loss of a peer to gangs
- Peer moves away
- Death of a sibling
- Loss of a romantic relationship

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (3)

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## **Adulthood:** Grief related to...

- Death or illness of a parent
- Loss of health
- Infertility
- Adopting out a child
- Loss of culture
- Changing jobs
- Losses resulting from marriage or becoming a parent
- Death of romantic partner
- Losses from addiction
- Loss of job or finances
- Death or suicide of a child
- End of a relationship
- Moving homes
- Losses related to military service

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (4)

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## **Middle age:** Grief related to...

- Death of, or ailing parents
- Loss of trust and safety due to infidelity or divorce
- Loss of health: Chronic or life-threatening illness
- Loss of romantic partner
- Changes in career, finances, social status, or homes
- Death of an adult sibling or friend

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (5)

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## **Retirement:** Grief related to...

- Loss due to a change in roles
- Death or illness of romantic partners
- Loss of financial security and resources
- Changes that result from retirement
- Death or illness of friends and family
- Loss of co-worker relationships

# Grief/loss across our lifetime (6)

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## **Older adults:** Grief related to...

- Loss of health: Chronic and life-threatening illness
- Unrealized hopes, dreams, and expectations
- Death of a romantic partner
- Death of friends and family
- Loss of home or relocation
- Loss of independence
- Loss of a pet
- Death of an adult child
- Death of a grandchild
- Loss of self

# Unhelpful “one-liners” (1)

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What you may have heard, or even said, about grief and loss:

- Time heals all wounds.
- They need to grieve alone.
- It could have been worse.
- Be strong.
- It must have been God’s plan.
- What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.
- They weren’t good enough for you anyway.
- Over time it won’t hurt as much as it does now.
- You can make new friends.
- They just need time.
- Big kids don’t cry.
- Keep a stiff upper lip.
- At least they aren’t suffering anymore.
- They’re in a better place now.
- You’re young. You’ll find someone else.
- You’ll feel better but you need to go through the stages of grief.

# Unhelpful “one-liners” (2)

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## Where do these clichés and misguided ideas come from?

- Our discomfort with emotional pain
- Search for an **intellectual explanation** for pain caused by events
  - Contributed to by our family and friends, our education, religious organizations, the media, etc.
- Repeated messages **throughout our lives** become strongly ingrained – we believe that these messages are true
  - “Be strong” = “Never cry, don’t talk about pain”
- Many well-meaning people **simply don’t have the right tools to help** in time of grief and loss

# What we have in common

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- We don't grieve well
- We're not comfortable with our uncomfortable feelings
- We're not comfortable with others' uncomfortable feelings
- We don't like talking about uncomfortable feelings
- Grief impacts...
  - Attention
  - Memory
  - Planning
  - Language
  - Relationships

# Resolving grief

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- Emotional investment = Intensity of grief
- Grief consists of two emotions:
  1. Pain: Uncommunicated, conflicting emotions that result from unresolved grief
  2. Sadness: The feeling of longing or missing.
- The goal of grief resolution is to **heal the pain**
- The sadness **does not go away**