

Grief: Supportive Counselling in the RAAM Clinic

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

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Module 1

GRIEF AND LOSS

Goals: Module 1

- 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

- 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

- 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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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

- 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

- 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**