


Grief, Trauma and Families

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Just Care. For Everyone.




Grief, Trauma and Families

(In other words this workshop is about us and our families)

Just Care. For Everyone.



The worst grief that anyone can ever experience is the grief you are experiencing right now.




We are a mind, a body, and a spirit.....our breath is the bridge.



Bereavement.....

- Deprive ruthlessly
- To be torn apart
- To be robbed



Child birth is as central to the human experience as death but we tend to celebrate one and ignore the other.....

Grief and Mourning

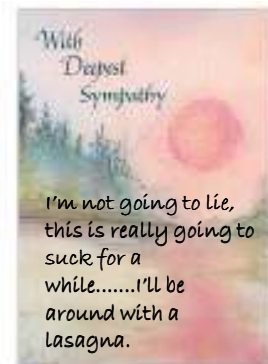
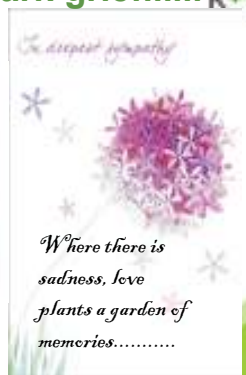


- Grief is the internal response to loss (and a unique perception of the loss)
- Mourning is the external expression of loss
- We all grieve but we don't all mourn

Grief is messy so we tend to want to sanitize mourning



I want Hallmark grief.....



A word on types of grief:



- "normal"
- Complicated
- Traumatic
- Disenfranchised grief

What do we grieve?



- **Physical** losses – the person of course, their presence
- **Symbolic** losses – the "assumptive world", loss of unmet expectations, roles, faith, meaning, purpose, identity, a life that makes sense



After a death a bereaved person's life has been changed forever....life can be good again but is never the same again



**What has been lost?
How has their world changed?**



The death of someone precious is not to be resolved but to be **expressed, storied, experienced** and gently over time in small doses, **find its way to meaning.**



Ok if I have to accept that people die then I want each death to be a "good one"



Trauma and Separation Distress

- **Separation Distress:** "normal" loss brings longing, searching and a desire for reunion
- **Trauma Distress:** re-enactment, fear, avoidance



Feelings are the same but there are more of them, more intensely and for longer

Sudden and traumatic death

- why, why, why, why, why
- Blame, guilt and anger
- Shame and stigma
- May involve the justice system and the media
- Intrusive images/stories of the deceased contain our worst fears of their terror and helplessness – perpetuated by the external world
- Heightened fear

Comprehending a death:


- Shock, numbness, confusion, disorientation, a sense of unreality
- In sudden death people “prepare” for the death after the death

Reacting to a loss: (bad news of the day is we have to feel it)

- Grief is a painful, deeply personal and sometimes lonely human experience
- Feeling pain in the presence of a caring and accepting other is healing

Favorite “cures” for grief:

- Keep busy
- Get back to normal as soon as possible

 I can release the pain that touches my memories, but only if I remember them. I can release my grief, but only if I express it. Memories and grief must have a heart to hold them.

Reconcile and make meaning:

- Put the death in the context of the life – not let the death define the entire life
- Confront our inability to change what has happened
- We need to take the relationship inside

Hallmark moment:



Everything happens for a reason.....

Life just happens.....whether we learn and grow from it is up to us

How can we help:



- Know ourselves
- Don't just do something, stand there
- Enter into what the bereaved person thinks and feels without any attempt to change what they think or feel
- Bring your curiosity and compassion – be with a grieving person as you would a dying person

Some of what survivors have taught me so far:



- I don't know their pain...but I am willing to sit with it
- My tears are welcome
- Make the deceased person real to you
- Sit with the endless search for "why"
- Realize this is a spiritual crisis and a healing journey – for both of us

- I need to take my sense of helplessness and fear elsewhere for expression
- Go slow
- Fish with a straight hook
- Encourage and look for signs of hope.....but don't define what hope looks like

Thank you



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