



E L N E C

Core Curriculum

End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium

Module 7: Loss, Grief & Bereavement



-
-
-

Loss, Grief, and Bereavement

- **Patient, family and nurse all experience losses**
- **Each person grieves in their own way**
- **An interdisciplinary care approach is vital**

-
-
-

Nurse's Role

- **Assess the grief**
- **Assist the patient with grief**
- **Support survivors**

The Grief Process

- **Begins before the death**
- **Not orderly or predictable**
- **Includes a series of stages or tasks**
- **No one “gets over it”**
- **Grief work leads to living with the loss**

Chan et al., 2004

Loss

- **A loss may be a person, thing, relationship, or situation.**
- **Grief is an emotional response to loss**
- **Mourning is the outward, social expression of loss**
- **Strongly influenced by culture**

Corless, 2010

-
-
-

Bereavement

- **The reaction of the survivor to the death of a family member or close friend.**
- **Be aware of cultural characteristics.**

D'Avanzo, 2008

Types of Grief

Anticipatory Grief

- **Grief before loss**
- **Actual or fear of potential losses**
- **Experienced by patient, family, professionals**
- **Children have unique needs**

Glass et al., 2010

•
•
•

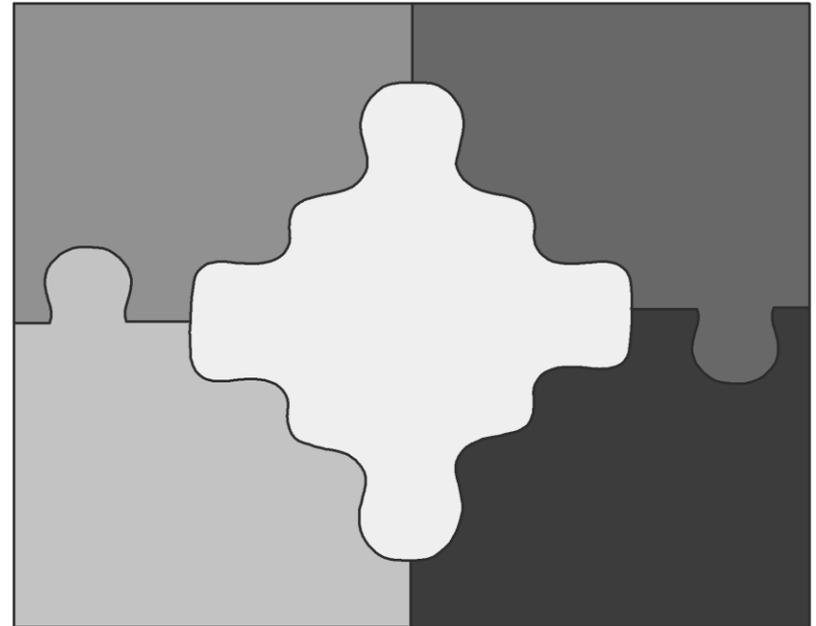
Normal Grief (Uncomplicated)

- **Normal feelings, behaviors and reactions to loss**
- **Physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions**

•
•
•

Complicated Grief

- **Chronic grief**
- **Delayed grief**
- **Exaggerated grief**
- **Masked grief**





Complicated Grief – Risk Factors

- **Sudden or traumatic death**
- **Suicide, homicide**
- **Death of a child**
- **Multiple losses**



Disenfranchised Grief

- **When loss cannot be openly acknowledged or socially sanctioned**
- **At risk- AIDS partners, ex-spouse, step-parent/child, terminated pregnancy**

-
-
-

Children's Grief

- **Based on developmental stages**
- **Can be normal or complicated**
- **Symptoms unique to children**

-
-
-

Stages and Tasks of Grief

Stage 1 **Notification and shock**

Stage 2 **Experience the loss**

Stage 3 **Reintegration**

Corless, 2010



Factors Influencing the Grief Process

- **Survivor personality**
- **Coping skills, patterns**
- **History of substance abuse**
- **Relationship to deceased**
- **Spiritual beliefs**
- **Type of death**
- **Survivor ethnicity and culture**





Grief Assessment

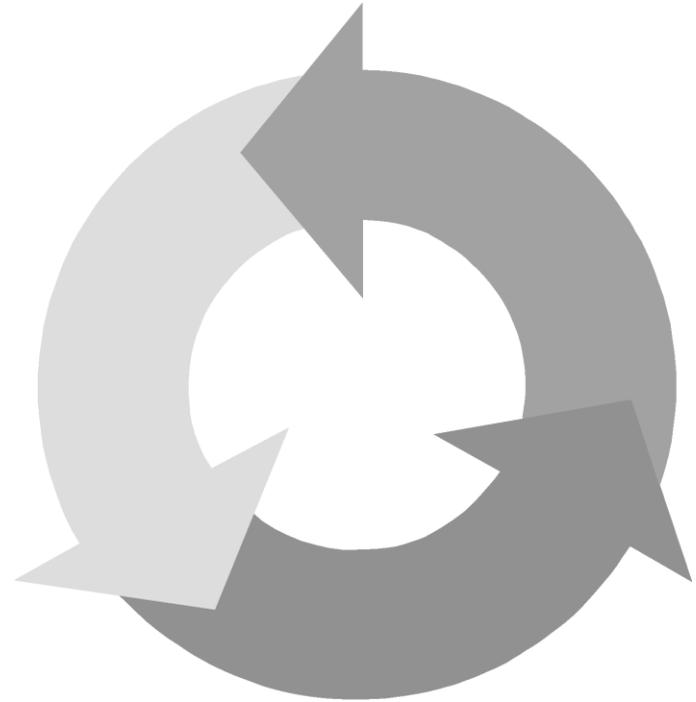
- **Begins at time of admission or diagnosis**
- **Ongoing to detect complicated grief**

Corless, 2010



Assessment by the Nurse

- **Type of grief**
- **Grief reactions**
- **Influencing factors**
- **General health of caregiver/survivor**



Glass et al., 2010

○
○
○

Bereavement Interventions for Children and Parents

- **Recognize developmental stage**
- **Refer to support groups**

Anticipatory Grief Interventions for Patient and Family

- **Preventive approaches to minimize sense of loss**
 - **Adaptive equipment to minimize loss of mobility**
 - **Advance directives to minimize loss of control**
 - **Reframing experiences to minimize effects**



Grief Interventions for Survivors

- **Provide presence**
- **Active listening, touch, silence, reassurance**
- **Identify support systems**
- **Use bereavement specialists & resources**
- **Normalize & individualize the grief process**
- **Actualize the loss & facilitate living without deceased**





Grief Interventions

- **Identify and express feelings – their story**
- **Special attention to disenfranchised grief**
- **Public funerals, rites, rituals, traditions**
- **Private reflection**
- **Spiritual care**
- **Recognize developmental stage in children**
- **Refer to support group**



Completion of the Grieving Process

- No one can predict completion
- Grief work is never completely finished
- Healing occurs when the pain is less



The Nurse: Prevention of Compassion Fatigue

Nurses witness:

- **Medical futility**
 - Prolongation of suffering
 - Denial of palliative care services

Nurses Experience:

- **Moral distress**

Ferrell, 2006

○
○
○

Cumulative Loss



Stages of Adaptation

- **Nurses new to working with the dying need to emotionally & spiritually adapt**
- **Stages of adaptation**
 - Intellectualization
 - Emotional survival
 - Depression
 - Emotional arrival
 - Deep compassion
 - The “doer”

Harper, 1994

○
○
○

Factors Influencing the Nurse's Adaptation

- **Professional education**
- **Personal death history**
- **Life changes**
- **Support systems**

Vachon & Huggard, 2010

-
-
-

Systems of Support

- **Balance**
- **Assessing support systems**
- **Spiritual support**
- **Education in end-of-life care**
- **Self care strategies**

Vachon & Huggard, 2010

Conclusion

- **Nursing care does not end with the death of a patient**
- **Loss, grief and bereavement need to be assessed with ongoing intervention**
- **Nurses must recognize and respond to their own grief**
- **Provide interdisciplinary care**



Caring for the Body and Soul

© 2005