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## Grief And Loss Across the Lifespan - Chapter 12

The destabilizing force of loss is an inevitable part of the human experience and central to life and growth. Some grievers mourn for the rest of their lives and do not grow from the loss. Research has shown that most individuals cope with the distress of loss and learn lessons of empathy and resilience, such as their ability to survive deep pain and that they are more resilient than they thought. People can process loss readily when they talk to someone who is supportive, calm, and nonjudgmental. Every person's loss experience is unique, framed by their developmental stage, the environments that have shaped them, the attachments they feel to the loss entity, their coping styles, and the type of loss whether sudden or expected.

Sadness is a normal part of human experience and a customary response to loss. It is unrealistic to believe that we can remove sadness or in some way work magic to make someone feel better. Losses related to attachment, to status and resources, and to meaning or valued goods inspire pain and likely contribute to the high rate of diagnosed depression in the western world. Yet these losses and concomitant feelings are common across all cultures and throughout human history. Most bereaved people will be helped by the practitioner, friend, or family member with the courage, curiosity, and compassion to sit with them calmly and truly listen to their stories and feelings. Their curiosity guides them to ask the gentle questions that the grievers need to help them tell their stories. The listener must do so without raising anxiety from the pressure to make magic happen. Such an impossible expectation comprises calm, intent, quiet listening and gentle probing of the bereaved thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Children and adults experience various maturational losses, some as a direct result of normal growth and aging and some related indirectly to the maturational stage an individual inhabits. These losses are common in each age group but often receive little support from others precisely because they are considered normal. Although not widely recognized, all changes involve loss, maturational losses as well as disenfranchised losses. Not all maturational losses must be actively mourned. Some simply deserve recognition as destabilizing and potentially growth producing events. As people recognize the great or small losses that affect them, they are better able to recognize how irritation, sadness, hypervigilance, or other reactions are related to the loss and made the scope more effectively.

The dual process model of coping with bereavement involves the bereaved oscillating between two modes of functioning while adapting to loss. In one, the bereaved yearn and search for the absent person or lost object while focusing on the loss. This is known as **loss orientation or LO**. In the other grievers focus on rebuilding their lives by engaging in new relationships, activities, and other distractions that move them away from active grieving and into their futures. This is known as **restoration orientation or RO**. The cycling allows needed time for both processing the loss and necessary respite. Although adults are often uncomfortable with children's responses

to death, children model well how to move between the two stages without judgement or second guessing the process that will help them heal.

## Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy - Introduction

Social media and online resources have become a source to help people who are grieving. These cyber mourning resources can be used open (a) a way to remember the deceased, (be) as ways to conduct intervention for the bereaved and (c) to do further research on bereavement and the mourning process. social media sites can include (1) online memorials, (2) Internet based intervention, (3) Internet bereavement support groups, (4) peer support web pages, (5) psychoeducational purposes, and (6) communicating with the deceased.

The nature of complicated bereavement.

Terms used to define, and diagnosis complicated bereavement include chronic grief, delayed grief, and absent grief. Complicated grief, however, is a Z code in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, and Z codes do not qualify for a third-party payment through insurance carriers. Moreover, the lack of precise terms makes rigorous research difficult regarding complicated bereavement. Researchers have circumvented these dilemmas by using well defined pathological entities such as depression, anxiety, and somatization, for which there is a good, standardized measure. Even though these clinical entities maybe part of a moaners experience they are not a measure of grief.

Disenfranchised grief

this in franchise grief refers to losses in the moaners life of relationships that are not socially sanctioned. A classic example would be the death of someone with whom the mourner is having an affair. If this affair is not widely known, the mourner will not be invited to participate in the funeral rituals and may not receive the social support that many people find helpful after a death. Alternate lifestyles may not be socially sanctioned, and the friend or a lover may be ostracized by the family of the deceased. There are numerous other examples of disenfranchised grief. There are two kinds of losses that are directly related to this concept of disenfranchised grief. *Socially negated losses* are those losses that society treats as non-losses. An example of this would be pregnancy loss, either spontaneous or induced. The second kind of loss related to disenfranchised grief would be *socially unspeakable losses*. These are specific losses about which the mourner has a difficult time talking. Common examples would be death by suicide and death by AIDS. Both losses carry some stigma in the broader society.

Continuing bonds

Continuing bonds are attachments to the deceased that are maintained rather than relinquished. This can include maintaining a sense of the presence of a deceased husband or wife. It can also include a child maintaining the presence of a deceased parent.

Meaning making

Meaning reconstruction and meaning making, concepts introduced and promoted by psychologist Robert Neimeyer, have been an important emphasis in the field over the past 20 years. He sees meaning reconstruction as the central process faced by bereaved individuals. This reconstruction is primarily accomplished using narratives or life stories. When unanticipated or

incongruous events such as death of a loved one occur, a person needs to redefine the self and relearn ways to engage with the world without the deceased. The person cannot return to a pre-loss level of functioning but learns how to develop a meaningful life without the deceased loved one. Death can challenge one assumption about the world (spiritual adjustments) and one's personal identity (internal adjustments).

### Resilience

Resilient people are those who adapt well to the loss and are not in need of either counseling or therapy. In children this is demonstrated in their academic performance, social life, communication about the deceased, self-worth sense of control, and healthy identification of a deceased parent. The term *adaptation to recovery* is also used for resilience. It refers to those mourners who make a good or effective adaptation to the loss. It can be said to have made a resilient adaptation.

### Trauma and grief

Like depression and grief, trauma and grief share many of the same behavioral features. There are three distinctions regarding trauma and grief. The first is trauma without bereavement. Here the person experiences a traumatic event that gives rise to trauma symptoms leading to a diagnosis of PTSD or acute stress disorder, mostly depending on the time frame. Other symptoms of depression and anxiety may lead to a comorbid diagnosis. In this first distinction, the traumatic event has not led to any deaths and the person is dealing with one or more of the classic trauma symptoms (intrusion, avoidance, hyperarousal) without bereavement. (2) Bereavement without trauma. Here the person has experienced the death of a loved one without experiencing trauma symptoms associated with the event. If there are complications after the loss, one of the complicated mourning categories would apply to this complication. (3) The third category would be called traumatic bereavement. Here the person experiences a death and there is something about the death itself (often violent deaths) or something about the person's experience of the death (often related to an insecure attachment or, conflicted relationship with the deceased) that gives rise to symptoms associated with trauma.

## In The Presence of Grief – Chapter 1

### When a child dies

Whether death has been unanticipated or has occurred in some configuration of the circumstances associated with anticipated death, the family position and life stages of the people participating, and particularly of the person who is dying or has died, also have a tremendous influence on the way in which the event is experienced. Nowhere is this more evident than when a child dies. Regardless of other variables the death of one's own child almost always seems a travesty. There is an extreme sense of dissonance and the feeling of something being extraordinarily wrong when parents bury a son or a daughter. This is especially true in the current era in which a continually increasing life expectancy seems to promise a full and active existence well into our 70s and 80s. That the death of a child may seem even more unlikely than in any earlier era when disease regularly claimed the lives of many at a young age.

### When a parent dies

A more expected occurrence for siblings is the death of a parent in the natural order of things. We presume that we will outlive our mothers and fathers. Nevertheless, when a parent dies, it signifies the end of a primary attachment bond and therefore the loss of one of the most important relationships in our lives. No matter what the age at which one loses a parent, and while different developmental issues thus may emerge, life thereafter is forever altered. What is more, the degree of closeness or distance characterizing the relationship with the deceased parent apparently has little influence on the intensity of the grief experienced by surviving children.

### When a spouse dies

When the spouse or a partner in committed relationship dies, similar issues emerge as a function of the age at the time of death, thereby changing the complexion of the loss. For example, the experience of widowhood varies considerably for young adults and/or those with young children, as compared with those in the middle of life or old age. The expectation is that members of the couple will grow old together and thus a death in youth or in the middle of life is likely to be more of a shock. In all situations, however when a wife, husband, or partner dies one loses one's companion and counterpart, and the feeling of aloneness may be overwhelming. Even in the relationship characterized by conflict, the absence of someone with whom to discuss and perhaps commiserate about daily events, the loss of a sexual partner, the lack of someone to share responsibilities for home and family, the burdens associated with being a single parent, as well as concerns about financial security, all may be keenly felt.

## In The Presence of Grief – Chapter 2

Although we cannot truly ever know the answers to the question surrounding death, interpretations in response to queries about what happens after death may be placed on the continuum ranging at one end, and from a belief in a state of nothingness to total annihilation to, at the other end, a perception that what occurs is a shift in reality which is part of an ongoing cycle of life, death, and rebirth, in between the many other notions about what death holds in store for each of us. These include belief in concepts such as heaven, hell, purgatory and nirvana, to name but a few currently accepted in our society. What is more, belief in the immortality of the soul seems to be common in all religions and to the mythologies of various cultures. The various common interpretations of death which emerge from a spiritual perspective have been summarized as follows: (1) a more enfeebled form of life, (2) the continuation of personal existence more or less as usual, (3) perpetual spiritual development, (4) a progression from waiting for judgment, and on a final eternal culmination (the most traditional form of Christian belief), (5) cycling and recycling of the self through life, death, and rebirth passages, and (6) nothing.

The concept of death is always relative, but the concept of death is exceedingly complex, ideas about death change, the developmental (goal) of death concepts is obscure, ambiguous, or still being evolved. Death concepts are influenced by the sensational context and are related to behavior.

Today we are blessed and cursed by a remarkable ability to cure diseases and to extend life even in the face of seriously terminal illnesses. Organ donation and transplantation, as well as the creation of a host of elaborate life support systems, have played a particularly significant role in this regard. At the same time the capacity to sustain life, often beyond the point of meaningful existence, also has spawned great controversy and conflict.

## Journey Across a Life Span – Chapter 3

### Culture Race & Ethnicity

Culture defines a social group within a society to which individuals belong and which gives meaning to our lives. It shapes our identity and forms the anchor for our traditions, beliefs, customs, and rituals. Culture influences how we view the world, practice religion, and interact with each other and how each member understands their work, roles, and sexuality.

Historically, race was defined as a category of people, grouped together because they shared certain physical characteristics including skin color, hair texture, facial shape, and body shape or size. Racial groups were believed to originate from certain geographical areas. Modern scientists have come to understand that race is a social construct and has very little relationship to biology. All humans belong to the same species.

Ethnicity means that people have a shared cultural heritage and are from the same race and geographical area. They share the same language and other attributes particular to that group, such as diet, customs, music and dance, family structure and roles, and religious beliefs or practices. Although as individuals we are not totally defined by these categories, they are important elements in our lives.

Religion is a specific system of beliefs and worship that is closely integrated with culture, ethnicity, and spirituality. Religion is an organized practice with rituals and symbols based on specific beliefs taken from the scriptures that provides a code of conduct for its members. The terms religion and spirituality are used interchangeably, but they're not the same. Religion is only one dimension of spirituality. Spirituality is concerned with how each individual find's purpose and meaning in his or her life. The outcome of spirituality is inner peace and feelings of wellbeing with the world. Spirituality includes how one connects with nature or a supreme being.

## Journey Across a Life Span – Chapter 4

### Family

The family unit is where the individual first learns to make decisions that will enable the promotion of health and wellbeing. Both children and adults are loved, protected, and taught within the family. Individuals learn about themselves, their relationships, and their behaviors within the family unit. Each person in the family play an important role in the other members health. Recently, the basic family unit has usually been defined as two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption who live together. This definition of family is narrow in its scope and does not accommodate the many different living arrangements that are in place today. A more current definition of family might be “two or more people who have chosen to live together and share their interests, roles, and resources.” Each family is unique in its style and makeup, but attachment and commitment are usually the features that bind people together.

The basic functions of a family are physical maintenance, protection, nurturance, socialization and education, reproduction, and recreation.

There are nine types of families which includes, nuclear-conjugal-or dyad families, extended families, single parent families, blended or reconstituted families, cohabitating families, communal families, foster or adoptive families, same-sex families, and transitional/transnational families.

Families may go through distinct stages of development: the couple stage, the childbearing stage, the grown child stage, and the older family stage. **The couple stage** involves establishing bonds between the individuals, adjusting to new routines, and defining roles and responsibilities. **The childbearing stage** Involves integrating baby into the family unit, adjusting to new roles; Extending relationships to extended families, and exploring and establishing childcare philosophy. **The grown child stage** includes adjusting to new roles and empty nesting, focusing on re-establishing marital relationship, and developing new roles, interests, and accomplishments. **The older family** includes adjusting to retirement living, adjusting to decline in income, adjusting to changing health and reduced energy, maintaining rewarding relationships with children and grandchildren, and establishing pleasurable activities to build self-esteem.

