

Process Recording

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Introduction

Client J is a Korean American Single woman. She is 26 years old with no children. She is Christian. She sought out counseling because she is currently in her second year of graduate program, however she has flunked out of her first two semesters. During her second semester (she is currently in a third semester), her grandmother passed away. Her grandmother is the one who raised her. Through that experience of her grandmother passing away, she realizes that she really needed help. She was drinking a lot, going clubbing a lot, and in a sense of losing herself. Her self-esteem has taken a drastic hit, as well as her academics. This was our first session. Prior to this verbatim, client J was speaking about the events that had led up to her feeling her second semester. She was explaining about how she failed both of her classes in the first semester, followed by failing one class in her second semester and getting an extremely low grade in the other class also during her second semester. I asked her to take me through the second semester and explain it through her lens.

Process Recording

E: tell me what happened the second semester

CJ: sure. So, since I had failed my first semester, I retook one of the classes I had failed along with a different class. The class that I had taken before, was familiar to me, so it wasn't difficult. The new class wasn't difficult either, but the both required writing.

CJ: I was doing ok, I wasn't motivated but I wasn't failing which I was happy about. When it came down to it, all I needed to do was my final papers for both classes. It sounds easy enough to do but writing papers is really hard for me, so I was already struggling there. However, I was trying to get through it.

CJ: I was already struggling with my papers and then my grandmother passed away. That was it for me. I couldn't...I was already struggling. That....*sniffles and wipes tears*...was the end of that semester.

E: I am so sorry for your loss.

E: if you can and are able to, tell me about your grandma

CJ: *deep breath* yeah, I can. My grandmother is the one who resided me. When I was very young, my grandmother took me in while my mother was off doing whatever she was doing. She was my mother. When my mother was ready, I went to live with her and from there I didn't see my grandmother as often as I should have. But my grandmother has always been very independent, I mean she literally drove everywhere. So she would come to my house every so often to visit.

CJ: then she was diagnosed with Cancer. It was very aggressive, and I just couldn't see her like that. *her voice is cracking at this point and she trying not to cry as she's speaking*

E: *I am trying not to cry, and to disassociate from what I'm currently hearing*

CJ: I of course went to see her because I was one of the people who had to take care of her while at the hospital, but it was hard. I didn't want to go and tried to stall seeing her because I couldn't deal with how she actually looked.

CJ: on the day she passed away, it was like she waited for me. I got there and held her hand and spoke with her.... *voice breaks and comes out in a whisper*.....then she passed away

E: *holding in tears and looking away from her*

—————Silence falls—————

E: I am so sorry *tears starting to fall* I can understand how you feel. I truly do. *Debating if I should self-disclose*

E: my brother passed away from cancer. We were very close and honestly, I miss him every day.

CJ: I'm so sorry to hear that *passes me the box of tissue I passed to her originally*

E: thank you. It's really hard, and I get it. Did you grieve?

CJ: I think I did but I'm not sure, I just cried and cried and cried, it's.....why am I not over this, why am I not fine? Why does this still hurt so many months later
at this point we are both crying and sniffing and passing the tissue box back and forth to each other

E: Whew, I understand that sentiment so much. Unfortunately, there is no timeline to grief, grief is not linear though we want it to be. And it sucks right, because you look around at others and they seem fine and you just feel like something is wrong with you because you clearly aren't, right?

CJ: yeah, everyone seems like they are great. Maybe they aren't on the inside, but they look fine to me. Me on the other hand, I.... I just, I should have visited her more. I have so much regrets. She was my mom....

E: I know, and unfortunately there isn't a speedy process you can do to get through grief. You literally have to go through the motions. You have to feel the pain and process it.

E: Grief is like a rollercoaster, there are days where you are having the best time. You feel good, your smiling, you're actually eating and sleeping. Then there are days where you spend the day crying with the world crumbling around you. One day doesn't exist without the other. It's all part of the process, the healing process.

CJ: but when does it stop hurting?

E: hmmm good question, I don't know. My brother passed away in 2013 and I still have days where I break down crying and I wish he was here to see me grown doing my dream job. I don't think it ever really stops hurting, I think you just get to a point where the pain isn't as crippling.

E: right now, the pain your feeling is like having your heart either ripped out of your chest or being stabbed about 29 time repeatedly in your heart, right?

CJ: yeah it sucks

E: it does and while that pain doesn't disappear, you adjust to it, you get used to them not being there physically anymore. Eventually, the pin becomes like a paper cut. It still stings and it may even bleed depending on how deep of a cut it is, but you can still keep moving and functioning without having to go to the hospital.

E: that's kind of like grief. You are hurting a lot right now, but as time goes on, it starts to minimize. You don't forget them, but you just remember them.

CJ: *sniffles and cries silently*

E: *tears start to fall silently*

E: I know, grief sucks.

CJ: *chuckles softly* yeah it does and it's really stupid

E: very stupid!

E: I get it, it's really hard and it isn't something anyone wants to deal with. But even with how unfortunate it is, it is something you have to sit with. You have to be able to process what you are feeling. Sit in that moment of grief and when you are ready for it, get up and start to make a new reality for yourself.

E: how are you feeling?

CJ: really sad but hopeful. I didn't know what to do but I'm feeling a little better after processing some of this with you. I think I really needed this crying session, thank you for crying with me. I really needed it.

In this moment, I watched as my client went from being very tense to being able to breathe a sigh of relief. When she first came into our session, she was very tense- almost like she had the weight of the world on her shoulders. She was very forthcoming with information, however I watched as she fought back tears and look away from me in what almost seemed like shame. When the part of our session (The process recording) occurred, it was as if the Dam had broken, and she was able to breathe for the first time. Speaking about her grandmother was not only hard for her physically, but I can see that it was hard emotionally as well. It was difficult for her to face that her grandmother wasn't someone that she can just call upon because she wasn't here any longer. I don't think that she intentionally tried to ignore that her grandmother passed away. Rather I think this was something that she just couldn't come to grips with and therefore just tried to tuck it away. In addition to her grandmother's passed This was her first time failing anything ever. This is her first year in Graduate school and she hasn't been able to pass one class yet. She is struggling with the negative self-talk that is occurring in addition to her grandmother's passing, and it was too much for her. I would imagine that this was a relief to hear "you are just where you need to be, sit in your grief and process it, you are not Alone". I can imagine that in that moment she may have felt a sense of relief and hope to know that all was not lost.

This was an interesting session for me. I was trying really hard not to cry with my client because I thought it would be unprofessional. I did not want my client to think I cannot handle what was she telling me. As a result, I found that the first twenty minutes of our session were very hard for me. I couldn't look her in her eyes, I was trying to pinch myself, shaking my legs, anything I could to distract myself from the tears that were forming. I reached my breaking point when she spoke about her grandmother waiting her for to get there before she passed away. That was very similar to what happened with me and my brother when he passed away from cancer. When my voice first broke as I was trying to speak, I was so disappointed in myself. When my client had to hand me to same tissue box, I had handed her, I was beyond disappointed for appearing weak before her. I tried to frantically wipes my tears while trying to remain calm, but I was very distraught. Hearing her tell me at the end that she appreciated our crying session, and this is what she really needed, reassured me in a way I could never reassure myself. This was a very raw and emotional session, one that I have never had before, and it was truly a learning experience for myself as the counselor.

When I was speaking my rational was trying to get her to understand that grieving doesn't have a time frame, nor does it look the same for everyone. I wanted and needed her to understand that grief is hard, and it isn't necessarily Something you want to do, but ultimately it is something she has to do. In this case, while her grandmother is the focus of her grief, she was also grieving her failed classes as well. She wanted to simply move on without acknowledging the damage that had been done. When my client was speaking, she was using avoidance. She was very determined to not address and face these things that needed to be grieved and process. She mentioned that she just wanted to hide in her room and just ignore her papers, and the fact that

her grandmother was in the hospital because she didn't want to face them. From that I noticed that avoidance was the path that she chooses to go anytime she faced something she didn't want to do. With my rational, I wanted to help her see that this isn't something you can simply ignore.

Self-Evaluation

Looking at my client's response, I would say that I that I was successful in getting my client to respond to my intervention and what I was trying to convey to her. I think ultimately what worked was the authenticity of the session. Yes, I was using grief therapy as a modality, but I think because I was able to bend to her level and feel what she may be feeling emotionally is what helped this modality be as successful as it was. When my client said "thank you for crying with me" it wasn't so much as the words being said, but rather the meaning behind the words. She in turn was saying "thank you for seeing me and helping me from the placed I currently am". I do not believe this modality of simply speaking about the need to grieve and morn would have been as affective had I not met her where she was. By choosing to self-disclosed, I showed her that I not only understand because I have experienced grief, but that I understand because this is something I'm still working through myself.

Brief Summary

The section shared above was the end of our session. My client responded she did tell me that this is what she needed but she didn't know that she needed. She was honest with me and told me that she was very nervous about counseling and didn't know what would come from it. However,

after our session, it encouraged her that this is not only what she needed but that she felt safe, comfortable and seen with me as her counselor. She was now excited because she felt that she was in good hands. This session went great. As I mentioned above, when I started to cry, I thought that I had caused the session to be a disaster because I would be seen as unable to handle what she was telling me. It turns out that was not the case at all. I think something that is also great is that this was a session in which my client not only learned something but Myself as the counselor also learned a great deal. This is by far one of my favorite stand-alone sessions, by far; I know there are many more precious sessions that I will keep near and dear to my heart, but this is the first of many that I am excited to experience. Over the over our next sessions, my plan is to tackle the different things she brought up in this first session. I want to address her self-esteem, her academics and of course continuing with this grieving process. In regard to her grieving her academics and her grandmother, I do want to address them separately.