

Individual and Family Development weekly paper due February 14<sup>th</sup>

Dr. Wells

Terri Zungre

My first point this week has to do with the idea of the person feeling a sense of relief when the loved one dies. No one told me this was normal. When my mother died, I had a sense of relief. Watching my mother take her last breaths is etched in mind like a trauma would be. Her groaning and grunting as though she was trying to hold on to life even in those last moments, is as strong as if it just happened. It was not a peaceful death of slipping away quietly with a subtle smile on her lips. My mom knew the Lord so that brings me comfort, but she still walked through pain and suffering before she went to be with Him. What took me by surprise was the extreme feelings of guilt that accompanied my relief after my mother's death. I wish I had read this book then when it happened, or talked through it with a therapist. Instead, I spiraled downward with thinking I was a terrible person. To comfort myself, I found solace in food, and gained twenty pounds. This went on for a year or two. I kept saying to myself, "Why don't I feel sadder? Why do I feel relieved? What is wrong with me?" I think this fell under what the Grief Loss Across the Life Span book describes as rumination. I was stuck in thinking unhealthy thoughts and couldn't break free. My relationship with my mother was complicated, and I came to realize with the help of a Christian counselor from church that although I loved my mom, I didn't love the drama and chaos that accompanied her. I did finally see a therapist that helped me to understand a lot of the dysfunction between her and I. The therapist was good to bring clarity to why our relationship was unhealthy. I am now more in the restoration

orientation but it took along time. It was good to understand for future clients that may be locked in rumination or vacillating between Loss and Restoration orientation.

My second point has to do with pregnancy. The increase of estrogen, progesterone, and HCG, cause unstable emotions with an increase in feelings of irritability, vulnerability, and roller coaster moods. Along with the emotional changes are the physical changes such as sleep disturbances, acid reflux, weight-gain with water-retention and bloating. A patient who already has body image problems instead of being excited about the pregnancy may find themselves depressed struggling with self-esteem or self-image problems. She may not be aware of why she is having self-esteem problems, and this can affect how the woman feels towards her baby. I find it interesting that the book explained that at the birth the body releases prolactin and oxytocin to buffer fear. Thank goodness God built in a feel good release for mom's toward their newborn babies. When my daughter had her baby, the nurse told us that skin-to-skin holding of the newborn was encouraged to release oxytocin as well. If as a therapist you have a pregnant client, it is good to keep all the emotional and physiological changes due to pregnancy in mind. They are feeling and experiencing everything twice as much as they normally would compared to how they functioned not being pregnant. The client might not be aware of how much they are feeling is due to the prenatal period, upcoming labor with delivery, and responsibilities of a newborn.

My third point is about prenatal loss. Both the GG book and the GL book covered a lot on prenatal loss. Unfortunately, if pre-natal bonding and attachment is healthy, the book emphasized it makes pre-natal loss and grief harder. My son and his wife lost their baby this year and suffered greatly. They had thought everything was fine and had just made an

announcement on Facebook with their happy news at the end of her third month. Sam, my daughter-in-law began to spot blood, and then shortly after lost the baby. The mourning process was helped I believe because they named their little girl Charlie, honored her with a burial at the ocean, and were able to cry together and give her back to the Lord. My daughter-in-law went through a crisis of her beliefs and faith though. Death is never easy to understand, but in this life, it is a part of life. One thing the book mentioned was the grief the siblings and grandparents also face. My granddaughter Raine had so been looking forward to this baby sister. I know she doesn't understand why the baby had to die. It took Sam a long time to become pregnant so we were all anticipating the birth of this child. I still grieve, if I am honest, with the what might have been with this grandchild. I am shocked at how much I think about it. A few of my friends said there might have been something wrong with the development and that it was probably for the best. Again, although that is possibly true, it doesn't minimize the loss for me, or for any of my family members. Disenfranchised grief is hard because you don't get the support I feel. The GL book mentioned in the second phase by Raphael-Leff (2005) mentioned the women starts to realize the two-ness (fetus as a separate person) as the fetus begins to move around. The mother even begins to wonder about what type of personality the baby will have. Sam had begun to feel fluttering's, and we as grandparents also wondered about the personality and looks of this new highly -anticipated addition to the family. Who will little Charlie look like or take after in personality?

Since the loss, Sam has been able to comfort other mothers that have had prenatal losses (three in fact). There is an understanding that comes from walking through it yourself and God has helped her draw on that to help others. Our own pain can help others in pain.

2 Corinthians 1:2-3 says “. . . the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” Sam put a heartfelt prayer to God that talked about the loss of the baby on Facebook, since they had a few weeks before made the happy announcement on Facebook, she felt she had to let her relatives in the Philippines know. My cousin and my friend had sent the prayer to their daughters-in-law who had just lost their prenatal babies. The prayer was written with such authentic raw emotion and a humble submission to God it resonated with many women that had lost their babies. Sam still hasn't conceived again yet, but they are now looking into adoption. If I can bring comfort to others as Sam did, our sufferings here at least may serve a greater purpose, because the death of a baby makes no sense.