Weekly reading paper due February 28th

Dr Wells class Terri Zungre

I am learning so much about different types of coping styles and attachments in these readings. Attachment styles are formed in early childhood and are usually how the person bonded with their mother. It makes sense to me that if you were minimally attached you might have a minimal grief response. I read the Avoidant/ Dismissing Attachment to my husband and he said, “Wow that sounds like me”. He was minimally attached to his mother, and his father left when he was three. His mother was an alcoholic who he didn’t feel very close to. He said he didn’t feel she was very responsible as a mother, having substance abuse problems kept her from carrying out adult duties of the household. His teenage sister paid the household bills, and functioned like the adult in the family. My husband said he was left alone a lot as a child, so he fended for himself. The book explained that with these types of attachments it is important to the person to be autonomous and self-reliant. They rarely want to depend on others. They have high opinion of themselves, so in stressful situations would rather rely on themselves than others. Their grief has few symptoms. Whether or not my husband is indeed this type of attachment remains to question, but it did give us pause. With a client, I would want to offer support and hopefully explore with them the benefit of allowing others in, and that in a time of grief it is ok to rely on someone else. I also am wondering when someone excepts Christ, how as our heavenly father who is always faithful, can help change and heal an insecure parental attachment. I read in one of our books somewhere that if the person can form an attachment to someone else it can help to turn into a healthy attachment. Two people intervened for my husband, a male teacher who my husband looked up to that served as a father figure and the

Lord. My husband said when he accepted Christ God showed Himself as Father to him. Christ made the difference in him to go from an angry young man with a chip on his shoulder to someone who could love.

Another point I read came under active emotional coping. If you can help the client redefine and reframe how they look at a bad situation, it can help them cope with the death better. This skill is one that may not come easily or naturally with some people. The book said that people who can look at something positive about the difficult situation will be able to move through the grief, and have a better result in the mourning process. Helping clients look for “silver linings” in the dark clouds of their relationships, can give a better outlook for the past and for their future. Humor, venting and ability to accept support are important in active emotional coping. I thought it was interesting that not just any support is helpful, because after the funeral people leave. Many come to support the loss at death and burial, but not as many stay around to continue to help the person through the mourning process. The book emphasized it is more important the person has support satisfaction which is described as social integration that entails time spent with others where they feel a part. Along with this time spent with others, support satisfaction goes to a deeper level of actually confiding in others. This speaks to me of having people around you that are not just a superficial relationship, but people you have gone to deeper places of the heart. Friends or family members that you trust. If a client doesn’t have this type of support in their life, as a therapist you could offer a listening ear with compassion, and a safe place for them to confide in about their loved one.

My third point has to do with how elementary school age kids process grief. Many children of the younger age cannot verbalize their loss or understand it completely, and will express it with bouts of crying and anger. Another thing the book brought out that is normal is they may have intense feelings of grief and ask questions about the deceased, and then the next minute be perfectly fine resuming play time. Children oscillate back and forth in their grief journey like adults; their grief just looks a little different.

I experienced this when playing with my grandkids. My dad had died a few months before. My granddaughter was close to him and was sad, but didn't talk about it much. She understands he is in heaven, and can't be with us anymore. Reece, my grandson who was five at the time, kept asking where Pap Pap went. When he was told heaven he then asked where heaven was, and if he could go visit him. That led to a whole discussion about death and believing in Jesus to take us to heaven when we die. He was very curious about everything.

Raine, my granddaughter, who is five, likes all things to do with being a princess. She likes to wear her princess crown all the time. One day Raine and I were playing, and she asked me out of the blue what heaven was like. I told her in heaven you get to wear a crown, because you are a daughter of the King Jesus. She gasped, and looked at me with her big brown eyes and very seriously said, "Nana, Pap Pap is wearing a crown!" And then she continued playing with her doll house. I can't tell you how that simple child-like faith statement touched me. Her true statement helped me reframe missing my father, and gave me a picture to visualize in my head when I am sad.