

Week 11

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Individual and Family Development

Points important from the book *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, chapter 6, *Grief Therapy: Resolving Complicated Mourning*:

1 - Grief counseling and grief therapy share similar goals, but important differences between the approaches concern helping people pass through grief and loss experiences.

Grief counseling aims to provide support, guidance, and education to individuals who have recently experienced a loss. The focus is on helping individuals to navigate the tasks of mourning, such as accepting the reality of the loss, undergoing the pain of grief, adapting to life without the person who has passed away, and finding a way to move forward in a significant way. The ultimate goal of grief counseling is to help the mourner better adapt to the loss and find a sense of closure.

On the other hand, grief therapy aims to address the specific conflicts and issues that prevent individuals from completing the tasks of mourning. This approach is typically used with individuals whose grief is chronic, delayed, excessive, or masked as physical symptoms. In grief therapy, the focus is on identifying and resolving these conflicts of separation, which may be related to issues such as unresolved anger or guilt, difficulty accepting the reality of the loss, or problems with attachment and separation.

Grief therapy typically involves a more in-depth and longer-term approach than grief counseling. The therapist may use various techniques, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness-based interventions, and interpersonal therapy, to help the individual work through their grief and

resolve the underlying conflicts. The ultimate goal of grief therapy is to help the individual achieve a sense of resolution and completion of the mourning process.

2 - *Grief therapy* is a specialized form most appropriate when the grieving process has become complicated. There are four main categories of complicated grief reactions where grief therapy is particularly beneficial.

- The first category is when the complicated grief reaction is manifested as prolonged grief. This means that the individual is experiencing grief for an extended period, interfering with their daily functioning. They may be preoccupied with thoughts of the deceased, experiencing intense sadness, and having difficulty finding life enjoyment.
- The second category is when the complicated grief reaction is manifested as delayed grief. This occurs when the individual appears to have coped well with the loss initially but later experiences a delayed grief reaction. A specific event, such as an anniversary or a similar loss, may trigger this.
- The third category is when the complicated grief reaction is manifested as an exaggerated grief response. In this situation, the individual's grief response is more intense than expected, interfering with their daily functioning. They may be experiencing intense feelings of guilt or anger, have difficulty sleeping, and experience physical symptoms.
- Finally, grief therapy is appropriate when the complicated grief reaction manifests through masked somatic or behavioral symptoms. This means that the individual may not be aware that their physical or behavioral symptoms are related to their grief. For example, they may be experiencing headaches, fatigue, or digestive problems.

In each of these categories, grief therapy aims to help the individual work through their grief and resolve any conflicts or issues preventing them from completing the tasks of mourning. Grief therapy may involve a combination of techniques, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy,

mindfulness-based interventions, and interpersonal therapy, to help the individual achieve resolution and completion of the mourning process.

3 - Grief therapy strives to help individuals resolve conflicts related to losing a loved one and adapt better to their new reality. This process can be challenging, requiring clients to confront difficult emotions and thoughts they may have avoided. The therapist plays a crucial role in providing the necessary support for successful grief work and giving the patient permission to grieve, which may have been lacking around the time of the death.

For the therapy to be effective, it is essential to establish a strong therapeutic alliance between the patient and therapist. This can be achieved by acknowledging and understanding the difficulty some people may experience when revisiting past loss. The greater the underlying conflict with the deceased, the more resistance there may be to explore painful emotions and thoughts. Therefore, the therapist should monitor and work with the patient's resistance throughout therapy.