Grief Is a Journey
Finding Your Path through Loss

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Goals of this Webinar

• To debunk some of the myths of grief
• To assist individuals grieving a loss by:
  – Validating grief
  – Offering advice for coping with loss
  – Exploring special losses

The Myths of Grief

• Grief is a journey through predictable stages
• Grief has a timetable
• Grief is about detachment
• Grief only occurs after a death
• Grief ends with closure and detachment
How to Avoid Grief

- Avoid any attachments!
- Grief is the price we pay for love

What is Grief?

- A reaction to loss
  - Each reaction is individual, impacted in part by:
    - Relationship
    - Circumstances of death and life
    - Support (both internal and external)
    - Health
    - Culture and spirituality

Grief

- Affects us in many ways
  - Physically
  - Emotionally
  - Intellectually
  - Behaviorally
  - Even spiritually
Styles of Grief

- Grieving styles help find a path through grief
  - Instrumental vs. Intuitive
  - Styles on a continuum
- Coping with grief and grieving styles as a family
  - Complementary or symmetrical?
  - Isolating or interacting?
  - Conflicting or respectful?

How we grieve is not a measure of love

Grief as a Roller Coaster

- Dual Process Model
- Ups and downs, good days and bad days
- Some predictable, some not
- Not universal stages but personal pathways (including resilience)

Resilience as a Pattern

- “Am I doing too well?”
- Some people have a comparatively limited reaction to loss, due to:
  - Fewer losses or other stress
  - Death was not sudden
  - Intrinsic spirituality
  - Good psychological health
- Patterns of resilience can teach us something
Resilient Grievers

- Had an optimistic mindset
- Responded to challenges
- Held the belief that, even in the worst situations, they could learn and grow
- Focused on positive memories

Grief

- No timetable to grief
- Over time, the pain lessens
- We return to similar, sometimes better, levels of functioning
- Yet bond always continues

Continuing Bonds

- Memories
- Biography
- Legacies
- Extraordinary experiences
- Spiritual connections
Continuing Bonds

- The lessening of grief is not the end of memory or attachment
- As the pain ebbs, positive memories become more common
- Surges of grief may still occur

When Grief Is Sudden

- A dual challenge
  - The challenge of grief
  - The challenge to our assumptive world, impacting concepts of benevolence, meaning, fairness, identity, and predictability
- Not necessarily easier or harder, just different

What Can Help?

- Choices in grief
- Catherine Sanders’s “Phases of Grief”
  - Shock
  - Awareness of loss
  - Conservation and withdrawal
  - The turning point
  - Renewal
- Worden’s Tasks
Accepting Reality

- The role of the funeral and other rituals
- Talking about the loss freely

Experiencing Emotions

- No need to bottle feelings
- Understanding ambivalence and finishing business
- Planning for difficult times

Adjusting to Life without the Person

- Assessing change
- Coping with loneliness
- Drawing from strengths and avoiding past weaknesses
- Recognizing secondary losses
- Getting support (D, L, R)
Continuing the Bond

- Building in moments to remember or reaffirm

**Sanders's Questions**
1. What do I wish to take from my old life into my new life?
2. What do I wish to leave behind?
3. What do I need to add?

Reviewing Faith and Meaning

- Challenge to our spirituality and assumptions
- How does your faith or philosophy speak to you?
- What resources does it offer (beliefs, practices, rituals, community)?

Resources for Your Struggle

- Books
- Self-help groups
- Counseling
Creating Rituals

• Types of Ritual
  – Continuity
  – Transition
  – Reconciliation
  – Affirmation

A Year From Now

• My exercise with my grief group
• My hope

Questions?

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Upcoming Event

- **Photographing Grief**
  - **Date**
    - Wednesday, May 16 from 4:30 – 6:30 pm ET
  - **Location**
    - TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing, 3033 Wilson Blvd., 3rd floor, Arlington, VA
  - **Presenters**
    - What's Your Grief co-founders
    - Litsa Williams and Eleanor Haley
  - **Register here**
    - https://griefphoto.eventbrite.com

Ordering Books

- Order from Amazon
- Order from Barnes & Noble
  - https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/grief-is-a-journey-dr-kenneth-j-doka/1120912726

CE Info

If you would like to receive CEs for this program, please go to educate.hospicefoundation.org

CE Code: GJNY