

Grief Is a Journey Finding Your Path through Loss

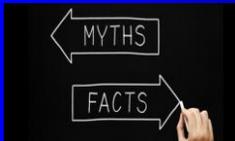
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How to Avoid Grief

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



The Myths of Grief



- Grief – a journey through predictable stages
- Grief has a timetable
- It is about detachment
- The myth of closure and detachment
- Grief is about death
- Resilience and grief

Grief as a Reaction to Loss

- The lost message of Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917)
- Disenfranchised Grief
 - Relationships not recognized
 - Losses unacknowledged



What is Grief?



- Very individual – we each grief in our own way
 - Relationship
 - Circumstances of death – and life
 - Support (internal and external)
 - Health
 - Culture and spirituality

Grief

- Affects us in many ways
 - Physically
 - Emotionally
 - How we think
 - Behave
 - Even spiritually



Children, Adolescents, and Grief



- Children and adolescents grieve in ways both similar too – and different from – adults
- Parental functioning and modeling
- Sandler – Importance of dual approach – simultaneous groups for children and Parents
- Value of peer-centered and expressive therapies

Styles of Grief

- Need to find a path through grief
- Instrumental vs. Intuitive Styles
- Note 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



- Stroebe and Schut – The Dual Process Model
- Ups and downs, good days and bad days
- Some predictable, some not
- No universal stages – rather personal pathways (including resilience)

Resilience as a Pattern

- You may be wondering if you are doing too well
- Some people have a comparatively limited reaction to loss
- Part is situation – fewer losses or other stress, death not sudden so chance to say goodbye, intrinsic spirituality, and good psychological health
- But could teach us something



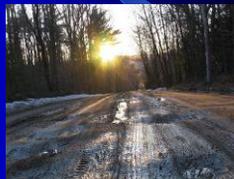
Resilient Grievors



- Had an optimistic mindset
- Responded to challenges
- A belief that even in the worst things, they could learn and grow
- Engendered positive memories

Grief

- No timetable to grief
- Over time the pain lessens
- We return to similar – sometimes better – levels of functioning
- Yet we continue a bond



Continuing Bonds

- Memories
- Biography
- Legacies
- Extraordinary Experiences
- Spiritual Connections



Continuing Bonds



- The lessening of grief is not the end of memory or attachment
- In fact as the pain ebbs, we can now enjoy memories
- Yet still may experience surges of grief

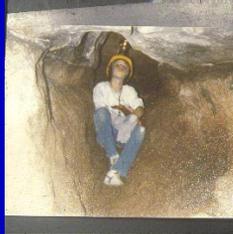
When Grief Is Sudden

- The dual challenge
- The challenge of grief
- The challenge to our assumptive world – benevolence, meaning and fairness, identity, and predictability
- Not necessarily easier -- different



What Can Help?

- Choices in grief
- Catherine Sanders Phases
 - Shock
 - Awareness of loss
 - Conservation and Withdrawal
 - The Turning Point
 - Renewal
- Worden's Tasks



Accepting Reality



- The role of 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 (and assessing) with loneliness
- Drawing from strengths – and avoiding past weaknesses
- Secondary losses
- Getting Support (D, L, R)

Continuing the Bond

- Building in moments to remember or reaffirm
- Sanders' 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



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

Sometimes Grief Can Become Complicated

- **Physical Illness**
 - Joint Unfavorable Environment
 - Stress
 - Changes in lifestyle
- **Psychological Illnesses including:**
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Adjust Disorders
 - Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder (candidate disorder)
 - Other Issues (e.g. substance abuse etc)



Yet Grief Can Engender Growth



- Significant or traumatic losses are seismic events that not only cause emotional distress but challenge beliefs, goals, and one's sense of personal narrative
- Life is now divided into before and after the event (Calhoun & Tedeschi)

Possible Growths

- Renewed Spirituality
 - Greater Appreciation of Life, Relationships, and Priorities
 - Growth in Character – Perceptions of Strength
 - Existential Awareness
 - Growth in Skills
 - Changes in Lifestyle
- Calhoun & Tedeschi



Strength-Based Grief Counseling

- Focuses on personal strengths
- Strengths of significant others
- Reviews strategies and solutions that worked in the past
- Focuses on hopes for future



Resources for Your Struggle

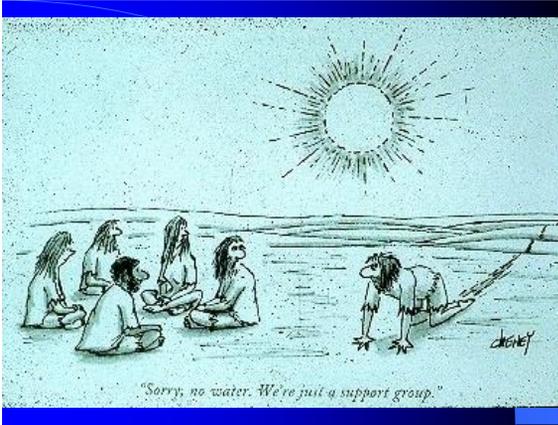
- Books
- Self-Help Groups
- Counseling
- Ritual



Bibliotherapy



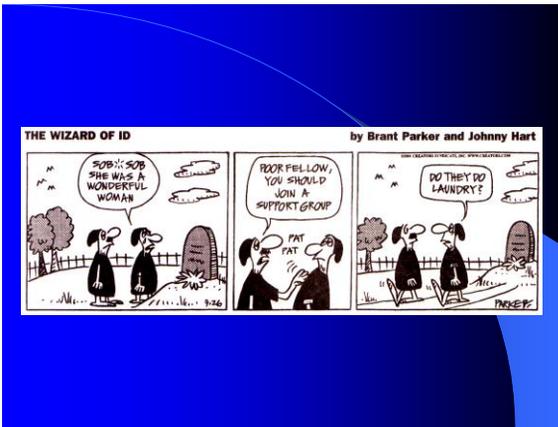
- Offers
 - Validation
 - Coping Resources
 - Hope
- Books can be
 - Personal accounts
 - Written by professionals
- Avoid books that stress one way or attempt to sell a program



Support Groups

- Validation
- Ventilation
- Suggestions for Coping
- Support and respite
- Helping others – helps self

Grieve, not Alone



Counseling

Seek Counseling

- Self-destructive
- Destructive thoughts toward others
- Cannot function in key roles
- Want to/think you might benefit



Creating Rituals



- The Value of Rituals
- Types of Ritual
 - Continuity
 - Transition
 - Reconciliation
 - Affirmation

A Year From Now

- My exercise with my grief group
- My hope