Loss, Grief and the Quest for Meaning

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Edward Hopper: Sun in an Empty Room

The Universality of Loss

“Losses are the shadow of all possessions--material and immaterial.”

--Carlos Sluzki

Principles of Self Care

Acknowledge the pain of the loss, and understand its function.
Sketching the Territory

Man’s Search for Meaning

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Viktor E. Frankl

Adaptive Grief

Acute Grief Processes

- Process “event story” of the death, oscillating between waves of painful emotion and ‘time outs’ of defensive exclusion
- Access “back story” of the relationship that provides attachment security

Integrated Grief

- Finality of death acknowledged
- Bittersweet emotions accessible & changing
- Mental representation of deceased revised
- Coherent narrative of loss formulated
- Life goals redefined
Waves of Grief

The integration of loss...

Like the warming of a room, or the coming of daylight, when you first notice the changes they have already been going on for some time.

--C.S. Lewis

Embrace a continuing bond with your loved one, rather than seek a final goodbye.

Two-Track Model
Two-Track Model of Bereavement
(Rubin, Death Studies)

- **Track 1: Biopsychosocial Functioning**
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Somatic concerns
  - Relations with others
  - Self-esteem
  - Work

- **Track 2: Relationship to Deceased**
  - Imagery and memory
  - Affect re deceased
  - Preoccupation
  - Idealization
  - Impact on self
  - Loss process
  - Memorialization

**MARY’S MOURNING: POSITIVE EMOTION**

*Session 1*

**Principles of Self Care**

Recognize that grief is processed between us, and not only within us.
All In the Family
Nadeau, Families Making Sense of Death

- Interviewed 48 members of 10 families about death of one of their members
- Meaning-making processes included stories, dreams, comparison, and “coincidancing”

Grounded theory categories of meanings
- What death was not
- No sense to be made
- Death was unfair
- Philosophical meaning
- Religion and afterlife
- Nature of the death
- Attitude of deceased
- Lessons learned

“Coincidancing”

Principles of Self Care

Open to the growth that may come with grief.
Complicated Grief Symptoms & Posttraumatic Growth
Currier, Holland & Neimeyer, *Traumatology*

- 617 ethnically diverse adults in first two years of loss
- Controlled for cause of death, nature of relationship and other background factors

Post-traumatic Growth

The Life Imprint

- Mannerisms and gestures
- Interests and vocation
- Ways of speaking and relating
- Personality and values