HFA Cares
Hospice Foundation of America’s Conversation, Advice, Resources and Education Series
Understanding Grief

Content Developed by:

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This webinar is provided through the support of a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Why Are You Here?

Possibly:

- In the midst of grief
- To make sense out of change
- Here to support someone
- Perhaps a caregiver
What Can You Expect from this Webinar?

• No magic wand

• Perhaps three things:
  • Reassurance
  • Ideas for coping with loss
  • A sense of hope
When Our Grief is Complicated

• This conversation is about the typical reactions experienced as we grieve.
• Sometimes we need more help
• Danger Signs
  • Self-Destructive Behaviors (including substance abuse)
  • Behaviors Destructive to Others
  • Grief is Disabling in Family, School, Work
• In such situations, seek professional help.
Finding Professional Help

- Importance of help
- Hospices often have self-help groups, counseling, and referral to resources.
- Funeral Directors, physicians, and clergy may know local resources.
What is Grief?

• Grief is the price we pay for love.
• A reaction to loss
• Very individual; We each grieve in our own way.
  • Relationship
  • Circumstances of death and life
  • The support we have
  • Our health
  • How faith and background support us in our grief
Grief

Affects us in many ways

- Physically
- Emotionally
- How we think
- Behave
- Even spiritually
Grief as a Roller Coaster

• Ups and downs, good days and bad days
• Like a roller coaster, the very beginning of the ride is not the worst.
• For most people, deep lows are experienced after the first few weeks.
• Some drops are 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.

• May come from circumstances surrounding loss.
Grief and Families

• We need to remember that everyone in our family may be touched by loss.

• Children and adolescents may show their grief in different ways.

• We may have different styles of grieving.
Grief

- No timetable for grief
- Over time, the pain lessens.
- We return to similar, sometimes better, levels of functioning.
- Yet we continue a bond—a connection with the person who died—always.
Keeping the Connection

- Memories
- Biography
- Legacies
- Extraordinary experiences
- Spiritual Connections
Keeping the Connection

- The lessening of grief is not the end of memory or attachment.
- Death does not end a relationship.
- Yet still may experience surges of grief—even later in life.
What Can Help?
We Need to Acknowledge our Loss

- Talking about the loss freely
- Funerals, memorials, and other rituals can be important.
We Need to Experience our Emotions

- Realizing our feelings are normal
- Understanding ambivalence and finishing business
- Planning for difficult times
We Have to Learn to Adjust to Life without the Person we Knew

- The “weirdness” of grief: Life goes on, but changes for us.
- Other losses we may experience
- Coping (and assessing) with loneliness and other changes
- Drawing from strengths and avoiding past weaknesses
- Getting Support (D, L, R)
Coping with Difficult Days

- Birthdays, Anniversaries, Holidays, “Firsts”
- Anniversaries of the death
- Validating our grief
- Planning ahead
- The Three C’s
  - Choose, Communicate, Compromise
We Need to Continue our Bond

Building in moments to remember or reaffirm

Sanders’ Questions

• What do I wish to take from my old life into my new life?
• What do I wish to leave behind?
• What do I need to add?
We Need to Understand the Ways Our Faith and Approach to Life Speak to our Loss

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)?
We Need Not Do It Alone: Resources for Your Struggle

Self-Help Books

Self-Help Groups

Self-Help Activities
  • Journaling
  • Expressive Approaches

Counseling
Kenneth J. Doka, PhD, MDiv

- Professor of Gerontology, The College of New Rochelle
- Senior Consultant, Hospice Foundation of America
- Licensed Mental Health Counselor
- Ordained Lutheran Minister
Hospice Foundation of America hopes this Understanding Grief webinar assists you as you cope with your loss.

Your local hospice may be a source of additional support.

HFA thanks Dr. Doka for his assistance in developing this webinar.

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Narration provided by Bernard K. Addison
For more information on hospice care, grief and bereavement, caregiving and end-of-life issues, please visit our website at www.hospicefoundation.org.

Or call us toll-free at 1-800-854-3402.
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