

## Hospice Foundation of America's Program

# THE GRIEVING BRAIN

### Online CE Course

#### DESCRIPTION

What does grief do to our brain? Using an integrative view of clinical psychology and cognitive neuroscience, Mary Frances O'Connor, PhD, author of *The Grieving Brain*, shares her decades of research on how our brain reacts to the loss of a loved one and how it adjusts to life without that person, shedding new light on the trajectory of grieving while dispelling popular, unscientific models of grief. In addition, Dr. O'Connor will address how empirical research (including neuroscience) has helped to define prolonged grief disorder and how targeted psychotherapy is an effective treatment for this disabling condition.

#### PROGRAM DETAILS

The online presentation features an experienced professional offering their own expertise on the topic. On the screen, you will see the slide presentation and will be able to see and hear the expert presenters.

**RELEASE DATE:** Program originally premiered September 12, 2023

**ON DEMAND:** Viewing available to registered individuals for 6 months after purchase.

**LENGTH:** 90 minutes

**CE HOURS:** 1.5 hours

**CONTENT LEVEL:** The program is mainly for professionals already working in the field, but is practical for all levels of education – entry level, intermediate or advanced.

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** The course is useful to Health care clinicians, social service clinicians and others working in the hospice, palliative care, counseling, hospital, nursing home, funeral home or faith community environments

#### HOW THE ONLINE COURSE WORKS

**Step 1** - Register/purchase the course

**Step 2** - View the course online through the link in your confirmation email or in your account.

**Step 3** – Complete the online exam and evaluation

#### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

A computer and reliable internet connection. Mobile service provider charges may apply.

#### REGISTRATION AND COURSE MATERIALS

Register directly online, on HFA's website: [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org).

**There are no refunds on registration.** \*Few exceptions may occur depending on the circumstance. To request a refund, a written request must be received (and granted) by HFA.

Course materials include the online program video, slides, and viewer guide. All course materials are accessible online immediately after registering.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THIS PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

1. Describe how the neurobiological attachment system encodes relationship bonds in humans and pair-bonded animals, using neurochemicals like oxytocin, dopamine, and endogenous opioids.
2. Define prolonged grief disorder and describe psychological and neuroscientific data that identify it.
3. Explain how rumination and avoidance can prolong the process of updating the prediction (i.e., learning) that the deceased is no longer available.

## PROGRAM OUTLINE

- I. Neurobiology of grief and grieving (23 min)
  - a. Neurobiology of attachment in prairie voles
  - b. Neurobiology of attachment in humans, including reward learning
  - c. Difference between grief and grieving
  - d. Cognitive neuroscience of grief
  - e. Gone But Also Everlasting theory
- II. Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) (14 min)
  - a. Debunking the myth of the 5 stages of grief
  - b. Empirical data on the grieving trajectories
  - c. Diagnostic criteria and cultural considerations
- III. Grieving as a form of learning (20 min)
  - a. Complications for learning are also complications for grieving
  - b. Bereavement as a health disparity
- IV. Toolkit of coping strategies and psychotherapeutic intervention (18 min)
  - a. Emotion regulation flexibility, the right strategy for the right moment
  - b. Avoidance
  - c. Rumination
- V. Question and Answer Session (15 min)

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

This program is valid for 1.5 contact hours of continuing education. View the current list of board approvals on HFA's website at [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org), located on the program's registration page.

## COURSE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS:

Participants must view the entire 90-minute program (online-streaming video). Partial credit is not awarded. Participants must also complete the entire CE process online before a certificate is awarded. The online CE process includes a required evaluation form and exam. The exam must be completed at 80% or above (the exam may be re-taken, if necessary).

## EXPERT SPEAKER

**Mary-Frances O'Connor, PhD**, is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Arizona, where she directs the Grief, Loss and Social Stress (GLASS) Lab, which investigates the effects of grief on the brain and the body. O'Connor earned a doctorate from the University of Arizona in 2004 and completed a fellowship at UCLA. Following a faculty appointment at UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology, she returned to the University of Arizona in 2012. Her work has been published in *the American Journal of Psychiatry*, *Biological Psychiatry*, and *Psychological Science*, and featured in *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. Having grown up in Montana, she now lives in Tucson, Arizona. For more information go to <https://www.maryfrancesoconnor.com/>.

## REVIEWER

**Angela Novas, MSN, RN, CRNP**, *Senior Medical Officer*, Hospice Foundation of America

## BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES:

The Grief, Loss, and Social Stress (GLASS) Lab

<https://maryfrancesoconnor.org/lab>

[Dwelling in Prolonged Grief: Resting State Functional Connectivity During Oxytocin and Placebo Administration](#)

Seeley, S.H., Andrews-Hanna, J.R., Allen, J.J.B., & O'Connor, M.-F. (2022). *Human Brain Mapping*, 1-13.

[Grieving as a Form of Learning: Insights From Neuroscience Applied to Grief and Loss](#)

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### [History and Status of Prolonged Grief Disorder as a Psychiatric Diagnosis](#)

Holly G. Prigerson, Sophia Kakarala, James Gang, Paul K. Maciejewski  
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Mario Mikulincer, Phillip R. Shaver, An attachment perspective on loss and grief,  
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Sekowski, M., & Prigerson, H. G. (2022). Disorganized attachment and prolonged grief. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 78, 1806– 1823. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23325>

Shear, M. K, Boelen, P. A., and Neimeyer, R. A. (2021). *Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society*.  
Routledge.

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**CE Certificates for this program may only be obtained through HFA.**

### **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITY (ADA)**

Reasonable accommodation may be made available, on an individual basis. To request accommodation, please contact HFA via email at [educate@hospicefoundation.org](mailto:educate@hospicefoundation.org) or call 800-854-3402, or write to HFA, 1707 L Street NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20036.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Planners (Panelists and Reviewers) disclose no conflict of interest relative to this educational activity.

### **FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR ADDRESSING GRIEVANCES**

**PLEASE CONTACT** Hospice Foundation of America (HFA)

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