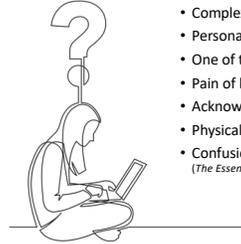


## GRIEF, LOSS and HOPE



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## WHAT IS GRIEF?



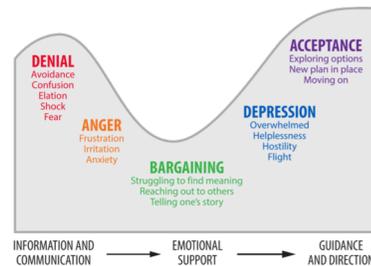
- Complex emotion
- Personal response to loss
- One of the most common experiences
- Pain of being without someone you loved or valued
- Acknowledge that your loss meant something to you
- Physical and emotional changes
- Confusion  
*(The Essential Guide to Grief and Grieving, Holland, Debra)*

## GRIEF REACTIONS

- **Physical**  
(headaches, change in appetite, dizziness, insomnia, chest pain, muscle weakness)
- **Emotional**  
(sadness, fear, anger, anxiety, guilt, relief, loneliness)
- **Cognitive**  
(difficulty concentrating, problems with decision making and memory, disbelief)
- **Behavioral**  
(crying, wearing clothes of the person you have lost, distancing from people)

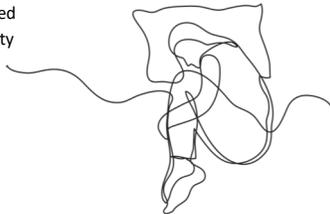
(Shupp, L. (2007) Grief-Normal, Complicated, Traumatic, WI, PESI)

## FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF: Kübler-Ross Model



## DENIAL

- The stage that helps you survive the loss
- Feelings may be suppressed
- Living in a preferable reality
- Coping mechanism

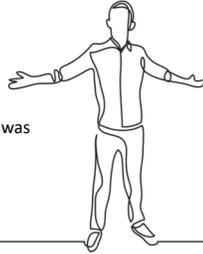


## ANGER

- Move to living in the actual reality
- Blame directed at the system doctors, family and friends
- Necessary stage
- How could this happen to me?
- Emotional connection to others

## BARGAINING

- Making a deal (often with God)
- False belief in negotiation changing an outcome
- Associated with guilt
- An attempt to get life back to what it was



## DEPRESSION

- Stage most often associated with grief
- Overwhelming feeling of emptiness
- Suicidal Ideation possible
- Changes in mood, behavior, and outlook



## ACCEPTANCE

- Restabilization of emotions
- Adjustment to the new normal
- Personal movement, growth and evolution



## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GRIEVING

- American culture does not always make it easy to express grief
- Glorify youth, beauty and health
- Expectation to hide emotions
- Judge families regarding time in getting back to normal
- The Jackie Kennedy phenomenon

[www.tneel.uic.edu](http://www.tneel.uic.edu)

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GRIEVING



- Rules for grieving
- Should you speak/not speak of the dead?
- Bali: women discouraged from crying
- Egypt: women display demonstrative weeping
- Chinese culture: women wail while men are silent
- Jewish tradition of Shivah
- Think of yourself as a guest in someone's home and ask questions instead of assuming that you know the rules

## AMBIGUOUS LOSS

- The most devastating type of loss because it is unclear and indeterminate
- Can cause personal and family problems
- The greater the ambiguity, the more difficult it is to master the resulting depression, anxiety and family conflict
- **People become immobilized:** Problem solving may be overwhelming because of the unknown regarding the loss-is it temporary or permanent



## AMBIGUOUS LOSS

### TWO TYPES:

- **Physically absent but psychologically present**  
Unclear whether the person is dead or alive, e.g., kidnapping victims and soldiers missing in action
- **Psychologically absent but physically present**  
The person is present but may be completely different in a short span of time, e.g. victims of traumatic head injury or addictions, chronic mental illness.

Ambiguous loss blurs family boundaries: if a loved one is in a semi-vegetative state a spouse may question if that is still their husband or wife. Children may wonder when mom or dad will be back.

(Pauline Boss. Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief)

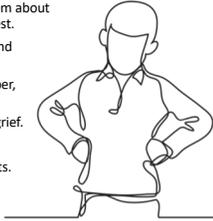
## GRIEVING CHILDREN

- Experiencing grief firsthand is different and confusing for children.
- Grief can be overwhelming because it may seem like nothing will ever be right again.
- Children grieve differently than adults. They will likely not react the way you think they will.
- Children process loss differently than adults.
- Children look to the adults in their lives to understand how to cope.
- Don't assume what your child knows based on their age—even infants recognize when there is a change in their caregivers and routines.



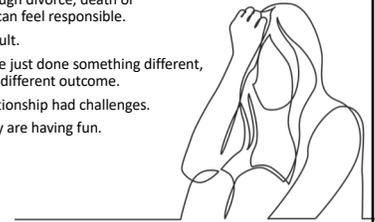
## COMMON REACTIONS OF CHILDREN

- Children may become upset if you try to talk with them about the accident. Pause the conversation if that seems best.
- Let your child know it is okay to show their feelings and model this behavior by showing your own feelings.
- Let older teens talk with others—trusted family member, youth pastor, therapist to name a few.
- Younger children will use play or drawing to express grief.
- Be aware of the child's developmental abilities.
- Younger children may have bowel or bladder accidents.



## FEELING GUILTY

- Whether loss occurs through divorce, death or ambiguous loss children can feel responsible.
- Question if it was their fault.
- Wonder if they could have just done something different, would there have been a different outcome.
- Increased guilt if the relationship had challenges.
- May feel guilty when they are having fun.



## FEELING ANGRY

- May focus the feelings on another person
- May be angry at God
- May direct the anger toward a "safe" family member
- Help children to identify an appropriate expression of their anger
- Set limits on unacceptable behaviors



## HELPING CHILDREN COPE

- Grief may occur when a favorite song, movie or annual event occurs. Let your child know that this grieving is natural.
- Talk to your child's teachers and pediatrician.
- Provide a calm environment and reassurance. Children may think that the same thing will happen to you.



## RESILIENCY: POSITIVE COPING

- Basic part of healthy psychological make-up
- **Individual Resilience:** ability to live comfortably with the ambiguity—now and into the future.
- **Family Resilience:** the path a family follows as it adapts and prospers in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. Being able to live comfortably and without conflict with unanswered questions is the real test of a family's resiliency.



## THE SEARCH FOR POSITIVE MEANING

- Meaning is making sense of a situation or event. Lack of meaning is dangerous to a person's health.
- Resilience is linked to giving meaning to those who have experienced an ambiguous loss.



## MEANING

- **Name the problem:** The problem is ambiguous loss.
- **Dialectical thinking:** Two ways of viewing ambiguous loss that combine opposing ideas. Your loved one is both here and not here.
- **Religion and spirituality:** Research has supported both religion and spirituality help those who grieve find peace and hope.
- **Forgiveness:** Start in small steps. No one is entirely decent or indecent.
- **Small good works:** Doing a small thing to help someone else assist in finding hope.

## MEANING

**Positive Attribution:** Although we won't be able to understand fully why the accident occurred, it is possible to look at the good that has come out of it.

## HINDERING MEANING

**Hate and Revenge:** Keep people in a rigid state where they are unable to move toward resiliency and hope.

## RESILIENCE

Move from problem-centered narratives to:

- Identification of strengths
- Flexibility
- Adaptability and achievements

Resilience has an important role in the recovery and adaptation processes after a traumatic brain injury—leading to better outcomes.



## DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE



- **Identify personal strengths** that could lead to success in the rehabilitation process.
- Share these with the team so that goals can incorporate and capitalize on these strengths.
- Identify personal, family and environmental strengths and barriers to the rehabilitation process e.g., low SES, addictions.

## DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE

- **Strengthen experiences**  
Assist in finding past experiences where the patient and/or family succeeded and utilize these with similar challenges
- **Integrate these into discussions**
- **Utilize role modeling**  
Have patients that have gone through a similar experience work side by side with another patient. This facilitates both peer support (sense of hope) and resilience.

## DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE

- **Supportive relationships:** After a TBI there are different levels of support
- The perception of support is more influential on an injured person's well-being than provision of instrumental support.
- Teach family members, caregivers and friends to provide emotional support.



## DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE

- **Sense of control:** Difficult to achieve with ambiguous loss. Learning to live well despite the lack of closure.
- **Things that help:** Recognizing that the world is not always just and fair.
- Externalize blame for the injury and decrease self-blame.
- Identify past competencies.
- Manage and make decisions. The patient can be a team lead.
- Increase successes.
- Accepting that some things will not change.
- Knowing the exceptions.
- Reconstruct rituals.



## DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE

- Spirituality and religion-closely tied to an attitude of gratitude.
- Spirituality allows for acceptance and comfort with ambiguity.
- When facing losses of magnitude, it is important to draw on something larger than themselves to make sense of things.
- Sometimes meaning is found through nature or the arts – places where two opposing truths can co-exist.
- Opportunities that have great meaning for the patient may be activities incorporated in the treatment plan.
- Call on members of the patient's faith for assistance. (Role of resilience in the rehabilitation of adults with acquired brain injury).

**H**EARL Physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually

**O**PTIMISM Life will return to a sense of normal, a new normal, with the best possible outcome

**P**OWER Pace yourself so that you will have the energy, strength and courage to do the work needed for yourself and your loved one

**E**NDURANCE Balance nutrition, rest, exercise and time to be best prepared for the stress of the journey

## HOPE

- Hope is the will to get to positive outcomes. The person who has hope will set goals and break the goals into small achievable steps.
- Healing and hope go hand in hand as we are forced to identify goals and direct our energy in achieving objectives.
- Hope has the ability to help people heal faster and easier.
- People who possess hope have a greater sense of well being in addition to improved health outcomes.
- The impact that hope can have on a patient's or family's recovery is strongly supported through empirical research and theoretical approaches.

## HOPE

### Why is hope important?

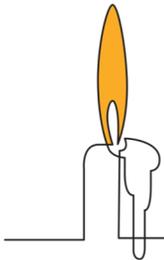
- Life has many obstacles. Getting closer to goals with the obstacles in our paths requires hope.
- Hope is a dynamic cognitive motivational system.
- Hope leads to learning goals—people with learning goals are engaged in learning, planning strategies, and monitoring progress.
- Learning goals are positively related to success in academics, arts, sciences, health care, sports and business.



## HOPE

- Without hope people turn to mastery goals.
- People who value mastery too highly become brittle and without resilience.
- Seeking perfection is often a manifestation of too much desire for mastery.
- Mastery may be important in the early stages of a TBI but the goal has to shift if there is not a cure. This transforms to acceptance and hope.

(www.psychologytoday.com)



*"I think perhaps I will always hold a candle for you—even until it burns my hand. And when the light has long since gone... I will be there in the darkness holding what remains, quite simply because I cannot let go."*

Ranata Suzuki, writer and poet

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