



MUSC Peers ECHO



THE GRIEF EXPERIENCE

- It is important to understand that grief is a normal and natural reaction to a loss of any kind.
- It is highly individual and each person grieves in a unique way.
- It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response to a devastating event.
- Grief is shaped by our experience, religious beliefs, culture, physical health, along with the cause of the loss.

You may experience all sorts of emotional and physical reactions during the grieving process;

- Denial, Disbelief, Shock
- Anger, Guilt, Frustration
- Bargaining
- Depression, Profound sadness, Longing, Loneliness
- Acceptance
- Sleeplessness, Brain fog, Lack of appetite

The stages of Grief Model, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Dr. Therese Rando's "Six R's"

- **Recognize** the loss: First, people must experience their loss and understand that it has happened.
- **React**: People react emotionally to their loss.
- **Recollect** and **Re-Experience**: People may review memories of their lost relationship (events that occurred, places visited together, or day to day moments that were experienced together).
- **Relinquish**: People begin to put their loss behind them, realizing and accepting that the world has truly changed and that there is no turning back.
- **Readjust**: People begin the process of returning to daily life and the loss starts to feel less acute and sharp.
- **Reinvest**: Ultimately, people re-enter the world, forming new relationships and commitments. They accept the changes that have occurred and move past them.

Disenfranchised Grief

- A type of grief that most people stigmatize and/or don't feel comfortable talking about; these are often losses that aren't considered mainstream.
- It's a loss where you're experiencing grief, but you don't get the normal kind of support that most people get.

Dr. Ken Doka, Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing Hidden Sorrow

Grief of an Overdose Death

- As more and more people are touched by addiction, many of us are likely experiencing the grief of an overdose death.
- There is often a complexity in overdose deaths in that people may feel like the death was somehow preventable or avoidable.

Unique Challenges of Grieving an Overdose Death

- Guilt
- Shame
- Blame
- Stigma and Isolation
- Fear and Anxiety

Some suggestions and reflections:

- It's going to be different for all of us; finding your own way to face the role of drugs in the loss, either to yourself and/or to others, is an important part of grieving an overdose death.
- Find some people you can share and explore your feelings in a safe, nonjudgmental place wherein you can voice whatever you are feeling, no matter how strange it may sound.
- Escape the isolation that some people feel during their grieving process; open yourself up to love of people in your life.

Some suggestions and reflections continued:

- If you are not feeling supported by the comments of friends, family, co-workers, it is ok to tell them!
- It is also okay to give yourself permission to get some space from those people who aren't helping for now.
- People who don't experience this type of loss may pressure you to get back to normal, know that we understand there is no such thing as normal to you right now, and may never experience the same "normal".

Some suggestions and reflections continued:

○ Rituals

- Life Books create connections. Within are relationships, memories, feelings, places, and things that make up the fabric of belonging to and being a part of a family or a group.
- Preparing favorite meal and/or having a meal together.
- Remembrance item; share about what it means to you and why it brings comfort.
- Create art in your loved one's memory.
- Writing the loved one a letter.
- Nurture heals! Spend time with Mother Nature.

Heavy by Mary Oliver

That time
I thought I could not
go any closer to grief
without dying

I went closer,
and I did not die.
Surely God
had his hand in this,

as well as friends.
Still, I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,

was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friend Daniel,
(brave even among lions),
"It's not the weight you carry

but how you carry it –
books, bricks, grief –
it's all in the way
you embrace it, balance it, carry it

when you cannot, and would not,
put it down.
"So I went practicing
Have you noticed?

Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?

How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world that are kind, and maybe

also troubled –roses in the wind,
the sea geese on the steep waves,
a love
to which there is no reply?

In closing, please know that we are so grateful to all of you as you continue to make yourselves available to provide Peer Recovery Support services. We are extremely fortunate to have you assist with the challenges of staff feeling overwhelmed while serving those who have addiction or substance use issue.

Resources

- GRASP: Grief Recovery After Substance Abuse Passing offers overdose grief support on a national level. <http://grasphelp.org/community/>
- Team Sharing Inc. is a national organization of parents who have lost a child to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and provides support and friendship to grieving families while working to raise awareness of Substance Use Disorder and its impact on our communities. <https://www.teamsharinginc.org/>
- Dougy Center <https://www.dougy.org/>
- JustPlainKillers.com. <https://justplainkillers.com/data/>

Questions?



1.0 CEU is awarded for this activity approved and accepted by NAADAC

**2nd and 4th Tuesday each month
12:00 – 1:00 pm**

Unique Challenges of Peers

03/16/2021

Hot topic: Fentanyl

Michael Capata, MD

Visit Our Website

<https://medicine.musc.edu/departments/psychiatry/divisions-and-programs/programs/echo>

