

Grieving: An Individual Journey

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CHANGE

Transitions in life include those we chose
and those we do not chose to experience

- Change means loss
 - Loss means grief



WHAT DOES GRIEF LOOK LIKE?

Physical reactions

Fatigue

Lethargy

Insomnia

Appetite changes/weight loss or gain

Affected dreams

Aches/pains and dry mouth

Sudden racing heart

Nervousness

Hives and other skin conditions

Risk for stress-related illnesses



WHAT DOES GRIEF FEEL LIKE?

Emotional Reactions

Anger

Sadness

Numbness

Helplessness - Hopelessness

Feelings of guilt

Feelings of blame

Feelings of resentment



INFLUENCES ON GRIEF

- Personality

- Family

- Culture



WHAT NEGATIVELY AFFECTS GRIEF?

Limited support system

Judgments from others

Self judgments

Protecting others



- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

Not written

in stone

Taking care not to categorize or label



When the Death is Sudden

suicide

shooting

vehicle accident

The story is harder to tell

INTEGRATING WITH REALITY



Grief vs. Major Depression

- Shared Symptoms

Lethargy, sadness, insomnia, loss of appetite

- Duration and Intensity

Grief reactions fluctuate and diminish over time, major depression maintains intensity and can be diagnosed after 2 months

- Suicide Ideation – Intent vs. Wishing



Rituals

- Few meaningful rituals in this culture
- What happens if established rituals do not work for an individual?
- What happens down the road?

Honoring holidays & special occasions



Grief and Spirituality

Belief system as support

Different or no belief system

Judgment of feelings

Norms of spiritual community



THE IDENTITY OF THE GRIEVER

- Caregiver with anticipatory grief
- Grief as the last connection to the loved one.
- Integrating the grief with the whole history of the loved one.
- Being “a griever” as opposed to a wife, daughter, husband, son, etc. who is grieving



PAST

“If Only”

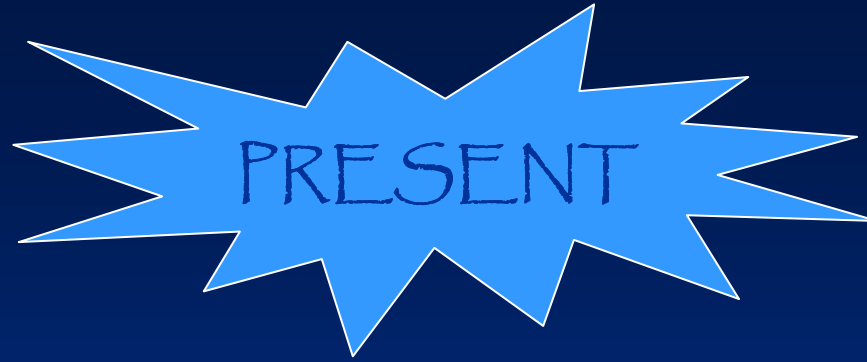
“I Should Have”



GUILT



SHAME



PRESENT

**DO SOMETHING
DIFFERENT**



FUTURE

“What If”



CONCERN/
worry



ANXIETY

**GETTING STUCK
IMMOBILIZED**



- Forgiveness
 - It's about 'letting go'
 - Forgiving others or forgiving self
- Guilt
 - What do I do with it?
 - Is it real or not?
- Know that you are 'normal'
 - Ok, so what is normal?



What Helps Smooth the Road?

- Talking
 - Telling one's story
 - Letting others know what you need
- Writing it down
 - Journal
 - Write a letter



Stress Management

- The more relaxed the body – the more relaxed the mind.

Exercise

Stretch

Hydration

Express yourself

Self talk

Positive imagery



So What About Us?

- How can we best serve those around us who are grieving?
 - Don't 'fix it' or 'make it go away'
 - Let them be where they need to be
 - Acknowledging your own grief



THE LOOK OF GRIEF DOWN THE ROAD

- Trust yourself and the process
- The end of grief does not mean forgetting the person
- Finding a different kind of normal

