

Bereavement: Coping With Losses

Presenter

Colleen Coombs, LCSW, CEAP, LEAP



Colleen Coombs is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Employee Assistance Professional, and Licensed Employee Assistance Professional with over six years of experience working with children, adolescents, adults, and geriatric adults who are dealing with a myriad of issues including grief and loss. Colleen worked as an Employee Assistance Program Counselor from 2011 to 2014 assisting clients by offering education, active listening, guidance, and coping skills.

In this role, Colleen has had several responsibilities including critical incident stress debriefing, manager referrals, and case management. Colleen is currently a Team Lead managing a direct team of nine, while always offering assistance to employees across the globe or in directly assisting clients over the phone. Colleen's mission is to provide compassion and empathy to those in need and to assist individuals in finding their happiness.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the different types of loss and change that cause grief
- Identify how grief affects us personally
- Understand our reactions to loss and how we can handle them in an effective manner
- Identify ways children deal with loss and how they can cope
- Discuss tips on how to support one another through the grieving process

Question



Besides death and divorce, what are some other types of loss that may cause grief?

Different Types of Grief

Types of Grief

- Death
- Divorce
- Job loss
- Retirement
- Empty nest
- Legal problems
- Moving

Poll

Which of the following losses are you currently experiencing?

- A. Death of someone
- B. Divorce
- C. Job loss or retirement
- D. Empty nest
- E. Moving

Grief

Grief is normal.

Grief can be a response to any unwanted change in a person's life.

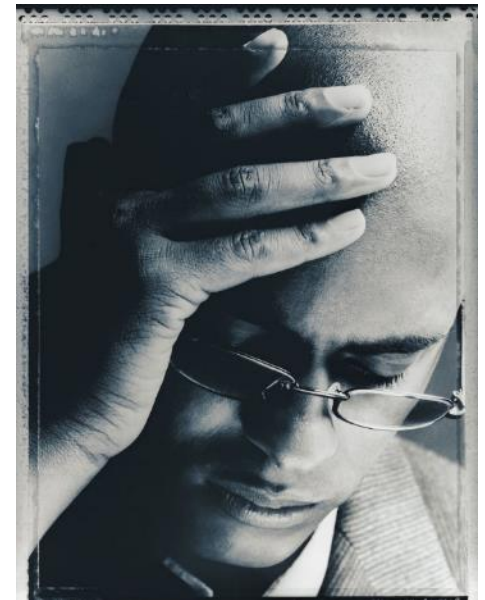
Grief is complicated.

Grief is not just emotional.

Grief gives us opportunities for growth.

Emotions That Can Arise From a Loss

- Shock
- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness
- Shame
- Emptiness
- Relief



Ways Individuals Handle Grief

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance



Grief is very personal, and is dealt with in a personal way.

Source: Kübler-Ross (1969)

Myths for How to Recover from Grief

- Don't feel bad.
- Replace the loss.
- Grieve alone.
- Just give it time.
- Be strong for others.
- Keep busy.



Source: James and Friedman (1998)

Healthy Ways to Deal With Grief

- Don't run away.
- Be patient and hang in there!
- Don't forget the past while moving on.
- Get support if you need it.



Additional Theories on Coping With Change and Grief

Four stages that will get you there:

- Disengagement
- Dis-identification
- Disenchantment
- Disorientation



Poll

When confronted with unexpected change or loss,
I tend to _____

- A. Embrace it directly
- B. Run for the hills
- C. Seek out a trusted advisor
- D. Keep it to myself

Stuck in a Grief Rut?

- Recognize when your reactions to your loss are becoming unhealthy.
- Be aware that longer periods of unhealthy reactions will negatively impact your performance and well-being.



Realizing You Are Coping in Unhealthy Ways

- Significant changes in behavior
- Angry outbursts
- Anxiety or panic
- Inconsistent performance
- Interpersonal difficulties at work and home
- Feeling overwhelmed with life



Tips for Coping

- Make changes in your life deliberately.
- Plan for the change.
- Do what is best for you.
- Create a support network.

Anniversaries and Reminders

- Triggers
 - Special days
 - Sights, sounds and smells
- Tips
 - Anticipate.
 - Make plans.
 - Allow your emotions.
 - Remember the good times.
 - Have a support system.
 - Begin a new tradition.



Self-Care

- Take good physical care of yourself.
- Don't suppress your feelings.
- Don't let others tell you what you should be feeling.
- Anticipate anniversaries and grief triggers.



What If You Can't Find the Silver Lining?

If you can't find the good in a bad situation:

- Step back.
- Re-evaluate.
- Ask for help.

How Do Children Cope?

Kids say they ...

- Play.
- Listen to music.
- Watch TV/play video games.
- Talk to friends.
- Try not to think about it.
- Try to work things out.
- Eat.
- Lose their temper.
- Talk to parents.
- Cry.
- Harm themselves.



Source: KidsHealth® KidsPoll (n.d.)

You Can Help Your Children!

“Grief, Bereavement, and Coping With Loss:
Children and Grief”

*Please refer to this handout for detailed information
and tips to assist you in helping your child.*



Children and Grief

- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Children_And_Grief_08.aspx
- Resources from the National Association of School Psychologists
<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources>
- The Center for Grieving Children
grievingchildren.org

Supporting Others

- Ask if the person wants to talk.
- Listen.
- Share a special memory.
- Refrain from telling the person how they should feel.
- Focus your support on the person grieving.
- Be present for the visitation, funeral, etc.
- Offer practical assistance.
- Continue to show support, and be mindful of anniversaries.



Contact Your EAP (Employee Assistance Program)

- Help with transitional times in life
- Referrals for ways to relieve stress, children's activities and support groups
- Much, much more ...



Thank You

Questions?

Works Cited

James, J.W., & Friedman, R. (1998). *The grief recovery handbook*. New York: Harper Collins.

KidsHealth. (n.d.). *What kids say about handling stress*. Retrieved July 11, 2017, from <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/kids-stress.html#>

Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.

Mayo Clinic Staff. (2015, September 24). *Grief: Coping with reminders after a loss*. Retrieved July 9, 2017, from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/end-of-life/in-depth/grief/art-20045340>

Smith, M., Robinson, R., & Segal, J. (Updated 2017, April). *Coping with grief and loss*. Retrieved July 9, 2017, from <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief-loss/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>

Sulaski, C. (Reviewed 2015). *Suggestions for speaking with bereaved individuals*. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.