Living with a GRIEVING HEART

THOUGHTS FROM A GRIEF WARRIOR
Objectives:

1. Understand what are the expected immediate changes in a patient’s mental, physical, and cognitive status upon the death of a loved one
2. Review the challenges of a grief-stricken patient in the first year after their loved one’s death.
3. Outline methods that healthcare providers can use to counsel grieving patients as they confront these challenges.
4. Discuss how healthcare providers can facilitate grieving patients in moving through these challenges and, ultimately, achieve healing and live a fulfilling and enjoyable life.
5. Review individualized treatment options for those who are grieving.
Introduction

Meet Marianne

A grief warrior
Who Is Grieving?

Covid > 1,700,000 deaths, each with 9 affected griever totaling 15 million

100,000 overdoses x 9 = 1.5 million griever

Total now = 57% of Americans experiencing loss in the last three years

Majority of our country grieving at the same time
### WHAT LEADS TO GRIEF

Have you gone through any of the following in the past 3 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of a family member or close friend, excluding your child or partner</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of a friendship/relationship</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family member’s serious illness or diagnosis of a chronic health condition</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of your pet</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your own serious illness or diagnosis of a chronic health condition</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of job/career</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of home or possessions</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of a spouse/partner</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of your child</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What we will Talk About:

Shock / Surprise

“New Normal”

Firsts Without

Grief Over Time

Finding Gratitude
SHOCK / SURPRISE

Emotions / Feelings

Physical Changes

Brain Changes
Takotsubo cardiomyopathy

![Graph showing incidence rate ratio (log scale) for days since death of a significant person in one's life. The x-axis represents different time periods: ≤1 day, 1-2 days, 2-3 days, 3-7 days, and 7-30 days. The y-axis represents the incidence rate ratio on a log scale.](image)
Blood chemistry changes

Elevated cortisol
Elevated sympathetic activity
Elevated vascular resistance
Elevated inflammatory markers
Elevated prothrombotic response

Changes are the same as seen in acute MI with increased
  ST
  phosphokinases
  troponins

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How do we engage?

Listen, listen, listen
Show up, just be present
Close the computer
Look into the griever’s eyes
Hold hands
Offer a hug
What NOT to Say:
(or stupid things people say when they are trying to make you feel better)

“I know how you feel.”
“You have so much to be thankful for.”
“Time heals all wounds.”
“It’s God’s will.”
“Everything will be OK.”
What We Think Grief Looks Like

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance
What We Think Grief Looks Like

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

What It Actually Looks Like

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Guilt
- Numbness
- Anxiety
- Acceptance
- Acceptance
*and so much more
Worden’s Tasks of Mourning

1) Accept the reality of loss

2) Process the pain of grief

3) Adjust to a world without the deceased
   External: everyday life
   Internal: affected feelings about self and abilities
   Spiritual: affected beliefs and views of the world

4) Find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

How To Integrate Loss in Your Life:

Encourage Calm:

- 5 Finger Breathing/ relax your jaw
- Tai Chi
- Massage
- Snuggle/contact
- Connect with family, friends, community & pets
Creating a new normal

- Ask for help / make a list
- Make important decisions before noon
- Take a NO GRIEF Day
- Get out in Nature:
  - use the five senses to focus
- Volunteer
- Practice self compassion
Firsts Without Grief fluctuates

Don’t feel bad about FEELING GOOD

Plan for the expected tough days:
  anniversaries
  birthdays
  holidays

Be with friends / family
Finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

Make room for thoughts of lost loved ones

- include in a prayer
- tell an uplifting story
- make their favorite food

Then let go and stay in the present
Grief Over Time

How shall I grieve?

How long will I grieve?

Letting Go of Pain/Holding on to memories
Finding Gratitude

HAPPINESS: Is letting go of what you thought your life should be and embracing and engaging in all that it is now.

I woke up, I am OK, My family is good: this is GREAT.

Look how far I have come
I am not a victim
I am a victor
The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen.”
LIFE IS PRECIOUS

SO ARE YOU