HELPING GRIEVING PATIENTS

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OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the grief process, how it may present, and ways to approach it.

2. Identify resources available to those who are grieving.
Grief is like the ocean; it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.

Vicki Harrison
3 Stages of Bereavement

1. Distress
2. Post-Traumatic Stress Reaction or Depression
3. Adaptation
Grief:

- Our internal feelings in response to loss.
- ANYTHING WE ARE ATTACHED TO.
- Can be similar for the loss of an object or concept as well.
- Gender and age are not determinant factors.
"When you are sorrowful
look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in
truth you are weeping for that
which has been your
delight."

Kahlil Gibran
Stages of Grief

1. Shock/Disbelief
2. Denial
3. Bargaining
4. Guilt
5. Anger
6. Depression
7. Acceptance/Hope

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, 2003
Components of the Grief Reaction

1. Grief - the psychological, personal component

2. Mourning - social response
Emotional Changes

1. Denial of the loss
2. Inferiority/Sadness
3. Identification with the lost
4. Guilt/ Culpability (regret, may not have done everything they could)
5. Anger, redirected anger (towards those seen as responsible or had ability to prevent loss)
6. Resolution and detachment
Mourning

1. Show respect to the lost
2. Follow cultural rituals
3. Facilitate resolution of grief (through burial/cremation process)
4. Smooth the process of coping
No rule book. No time frame. No judgement. Grief is as individual as a fingerprint. Do what is right for your soul.

~lfw
Emotional Symptoms

- 1. Irritability
- 2. Numbness
- 3. Bitterness
- 4. Detachment
- 5. Preoccupation with loss
- 6. Anhedonia (unable to experience pleasure)
Physical Symptoms

- 1. GI Issues
- 2. Fatigue
- 3. Chest pain
- 4. Muscle tension
- 5. Headaches
How we want grief to work

How grief actually works
Factors that complicate grief

- No previous experience with grief
- Other recent losses
- Personal history of multiple losses
- Lack of support
- Social norms that trivialize loss
- Insensitive comments from others
- Feelings of guilt around the loss
- Untimely nature of the death
- Sudden loss
- Death after prolonged, illness or suffering
Factors that complicate grief

- Death with no known causes or that are preventable
- Unexplained disappearances
- Not being present at the death
- Not viewing the body after death
- Witnessing a painful or traumatic death
- Losses that occur in conjunction with other significant events
- Anniversary dates, holidays
- Media stories that misrepresent or cast doubt on treatment
- Advice based on negative experiences of others in regards to loss
Myths about Grief

1. The pain will go away if you ignore it.

2. It is important to “be strong” in the face of loss.

3. If you don’t cry, it means you are not sorry about the loss.

4. Grief should last about a year.
Complicated grief

- 10% of all grief
- Unresolved, incomplete, or unfinished grief
- Flashbacks, intrusive memories, searching/yearning
- Not necessarily pathological, “not crazy...just having trouble coping”
- When normal feelings of grief do not fade, same pain as when it first occurred
Prolonged grief

- Definition: intense reaction, extends beyond typical timeframe

- 42%

- Outcome affected by early intervention
Anticipatory grief

- Normal mourning when expecting a loss
- Have time to take care of business
- Still caring for them
- Dealing with the thinking, feeling, and social reactions
Disenfranchised grief

- After a loss that is not socially acknowledged
- Forced to deal with it on their own (minimal support)
- Expected to continue as usual
Sudden loss

- Distress
- Acute stress disorder
- Denial of death
- Behavioral reactions
- Idealism of the lost
Attachment

- Grief is proportional to level of attachment.

- Hyper-attachment can lead to complicated grief.

- Facilitates connection...very important!
Children

- Working on individuation and progress through developmental stages.
- Need to approach grief on their level.
- They take cues from the adults around them.
Crisis Assessment/Intervention

- Make sure to ask about all losses.
- Assess history of loss.
- Ensure loss is acknowledged and honored.
- Make extra emphasis on connecting with supports.
- Prepare for long-term healing process.
Resources

- Mental Health referrals

- **Burton Funeral Home**
  
  525 Main Street East  
  Girard, PA 16417  
  (814)-774-3603  
  Meet: the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} Mondays of every month at 7:00 p.m.  
  Location: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
  8942 Ridge Road  
  Girard, PA 16417
Resources

- Burton Funeral Home -- Lending Library
  An excellent, free lending library with a wide selection of books covering different aspects of death, dying, grief, bereavement, coping and healing.
  
  Contact: Burton Funeral Home and Crematory, Inc.
  602 West 10th Street
  Erie, PA 16502
  (814)-454-4551
Resources

**Hospice Bereavement Groups:**
These support groups are offered by our local Hospices for anyone who has been bereaved by the loss of a loved one. The groups are free of charge and the public is invited.

- **Great Lakes Hospice**
  Location: 1700 Peach Street, Suite # 244
  Erie, PA 16501

  BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS 2015
  For Meeting and contact information - please see the attached information sheet at the very end of this list. Groups are free of charge and open to the public.

- **Visiting Nurse Association of Erie County (VNA)**
  Location: 2253 West Grandview Boulevard
  Erie, PA 16506
  Meet: the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.
  Contact: Sam Harakal
  (814)-454-2831
Resources

**Asera Care Hospice**
Contact: Asera Care Hospice  
1600 Peninsula Drive Ste.14  
Erie, PA 16505  
(814)-836-5255  
Locations: Call the number above for the 2016/2017 schedule.

**Heartland Hospice**
This group offers support for and education on the topic of grief. For more information please call (814)-878-5990.

Contact: Heartland Hospice  
719 Indiana Drive  
Erie, PA 16505  
Meet: Last Wednesday of every month 4:00-5:00 p.m.  
Audrey McLaughlin – Bereavement Coordinator
The Diocese of Erie, Catholic Charities

The Diocese of Erie, Catholic Charities offers a variety of support groups. For more information, please contact them at 800-374-3723 ext. 265; or 814-824-1265.

Included is a support group called Transitions. It is a peer ministry for Divorced, Widowed and Separated Persons. Please call the number above for meeting times. Currently, meetings are held the 4th Sunday of each month between 2 and 4 p.m. There is a discussion topic and refreshments available.

Email: www.eriercd.org/Transitions.asp
Website address: www.ErieRCD.org
The Caring Place

The Caring Place is dedicated to children, adolescents and their families who have lost a loved one. It is a safe place with safe people where children and families can:

- Know they are not alone in their grief
- Share their feelings, memories, and experiences in an atmosphere of non-judgmental acceptance
- See that what they are going through is normal
- Know that hope and healing are possible

The children and their parents who attend Caring Place sessions receive support and encouragement from other members of their groups other children and adults who have experienced the same types of losses. Through the meetings they discover what is lost, what is left, and what is possible.

Contact: 1-866-212-4673
Meet: Support groups are held on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at no charge.
Location: 510 Cranberry Street
Erie, PA 16507
Website: http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/cp2/index.shtml
It's ok to feel ok
Resources

- **Empty Arms**
  A support group for anyone involved in bereavement due to a miscarriage, stillbirth, or newborn death. There is a lending library available. One-to-one telephone counseling is available too. Empty arms makes and provides burial outfits for deceased babies. The outfits are distributed by the hospitals maternity units. Please connect with us on Facebook at: Empty Arms Erie.
  
  Contact: Carol Cacchione (814)-480-8866 or Patty McGuinness (814)-838-6346
  Meets: the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m.
  Location: Liberty Family Practice Bldg.
  3413 Cherry Street
  Erie, PA 16508

- **Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Family Support Group**
  A family support group of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.
  Contact: (800)-726-2873
  Website: [lls.org](http://lls.org). Put in your zip code and click on the chapter locator icon.

- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors**
  Offering Grief Support for military families
  Website: [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org). TAPS offers grief support for military families who’ve lost someone.
  - An online community whereby people can chat with one another and give support as well as newsletters and message boards about events going on everywhere
  - There are educational and online training programs available
  - There are lists available of various events and presentations related to this topic
  - There are a variety of press releases and other information tools available
Resources

- **PALS: People After Loss From Suicide**
  PALS is a non-denominational support group founded by five women in the Erie community who saw a need and responded to it. PALS was initially funded by the Sisters of St. Joseph Ministry Fund. PALS continues to reach out to all those in need of this ministry.
  Location: **St. Mark Center**
  429 East Grandview Boulevard
  Erie, PA 16504
  Meet: 3rd Tuesday of each month 7-9 p.m. at St. Mark’s Center
  Contact: Michael Adamus at Catholic Charities at 814-824-1257.

- **Victim Witness Services:**
  **Homicide Survivors Support Group**
  Individual counseling is available. All services are free of charge.
  Contact: Victim Witness Services
  125 West 18th Street
  Erie, PA 16501
  (814)-455-9515

- **Bereavement Support Group in North East, PA**
  This support group is for anyone who has endured a significant loss.
  Location: Community Nursing Services Office
  7 Park Street
  North East, PA 16428
  Meet: the 3rd Thursday of every month from 3 until 5 p.m.
  Contact: Maggie Hitchcock
  (814)-725-4300
Resources

- **Lucy’s First Step Fund**
  The goal of Lucy’s First Step Fund is to provide resources to parents who have lost a child. The Mitchell family understands first-hand how overwhelming the grief can be and wish to provide an opportunity for support and growth. They want to help parents take their first steps toward learning how to live, when the loss never goes away.

  **Location:** Lincoln Education Center at the UPMC Hamot Women’s Hospital  
  118 East Second Street  
  Erie, PA
  **Meet:** Six-week program offered weekly from 6:30 to 8 p.m.
  **Contact:** Hamot Health Connection  
  (814)-877-6145
  Lesley Mitchell  
  (814)- 969-1267  
  lucysfirststep@gmail.com

  Program is offered free of charge. Call for more information about meeting dates.

- **Emma’s Footprints**
  Mission Statement: Emma’s Footprints was founded to support families that have experienced pregnancy or infant loss. Our goal is to provide compassionate guidance and resources as families begin and continue this difficult journey.

  **Contact:** Emma’s Footprints  
  11515 Lay Road  
  Edinboro, PA 16412  
  1 (814) 440-1634Call for more information.

- **Safe Harbor Behavioral Health**
  Grief and Loss Therapeutic Group

  **Location:** Safe Harbor Behavioral Health  
  1330 West 26th Street  
  Erie, PA 16505
  **Meet:** Wednesday’s at 1 p.m.
  **Contact:** Rachel Lackovic, LCSW  
  (814)-451-2309  
  Safe Harbor Behavior Health, Intake Line  
  (814)-451-2214
REFERENCES


ONLINE RESOURCES

www.helpguide.org
http://psychcentral.com
www.medicinenet.com
www.vet.upenn.edu
www.joeldehasse.com
www.psychguides.com
www.petloss.com
www.pet-loss-matters.com
www.americanhumane.org
www.avma.org
www.griefhealingblog.com
www.pet-loss.net
www.healgrief.org
www.missfoundation.org
www.thegrieftoolbox.com
Organizations

American Association of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
Association of Death Education and Counseling
Center to Advance Palliative Care
International Children’s Palliative Care Association
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organizations
Open to Hope Foundation
The Bereaved Parents