

ASCERT FAMILYWORKS HSC Public Health Agency
COUNSELLING · MEDIATION · TRAINING Project supported by the PHA


Understanding Bereavement



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Housekeeping


- Breaks
- Microphones
- Internet connections
- Confidentiality
- Questions/comments



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Learning Aims


- Introductions
- Statistics
- Disenfranchised grief
- Understanding bereavement as a process
- Symptoms of bereavement




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Learning Aims



- Understanding the impact of attachment on bereavement
- Bereavement and the individual's own experience
- Culture and bereavement
- Loss and recovery
- What is complicated grief?




 **Statistics**

- Remember, statistics provide the numbers that are known
 - Deaths by alcohol/drug use may be under recorded for many reasons
- Drug-related deaths (2019)
 - Male: 133 total, 14.3/100,000
 - Female: 58 total, 6.0/100,000
- Alcohol-related deaths (2019)
 - Male: 210 total, rate = 22.5/100,000
 - Female: 210 total, rate = 13.1/100,000


Source: NISRA

Beginning the Journey

 **Disenfranchised Grief**


- **Not showing the right emotions**
 - People have different emotional reactions to loss
 - Common images of grief might include crying, sadness, and depression
 - Some people react differently - they may show no emotion at all, feel relief, or another emotion others may not expect
- **Taboo cause of death**
 - Murders, suicides, drug overdoses, misuse of alcohol, miscarriages
 - Many causes of premature death can be hard to about, and most people are likely to resist talking about what for them was a traumatic loss.

 **Disenfranchised Grief**

- **Grieving a loss that isn't death**
 - Death isn't the only major or indeed most important loss you could experience
 - Losing someone who is still alive through loss of contact (deliberate or otherwise), because their personality changed drastically, as a result a serious of mental illness, or through the slow loss of dementia
 - Some people may not understand why a loss affects you so deeply.....
'after all, they are not dead!'
- **Social interactions**
 - Others' reactions to your loss and grief can make you feel like you don't have a right to grieve or your grieving isn't valid. You might hear...

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Examples of Disenfranchised Grief




Dementia of a loved one
Addiction of a loved one
Death of an ex-partner
Death of an abuser
Death of a pet

Breakup or divorce
Infertility
Abortion
Moving to a new community
Losing a job

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Worden's Tasks



1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To work through the pain of grief
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
4. To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life

William Worden

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Kübler-Ross 5 Stages of Grief


1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

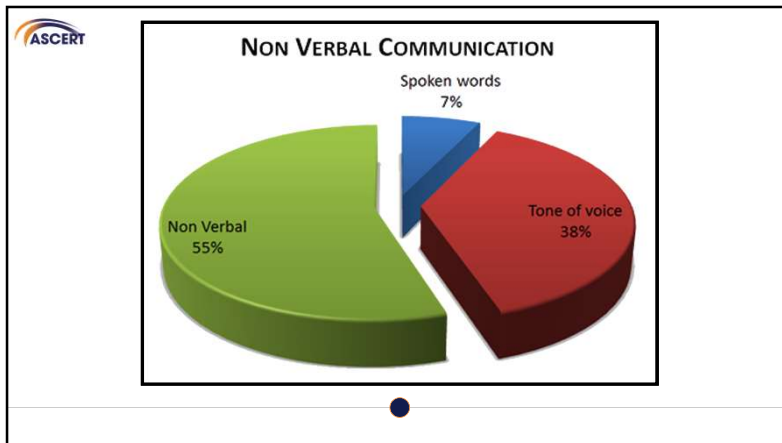
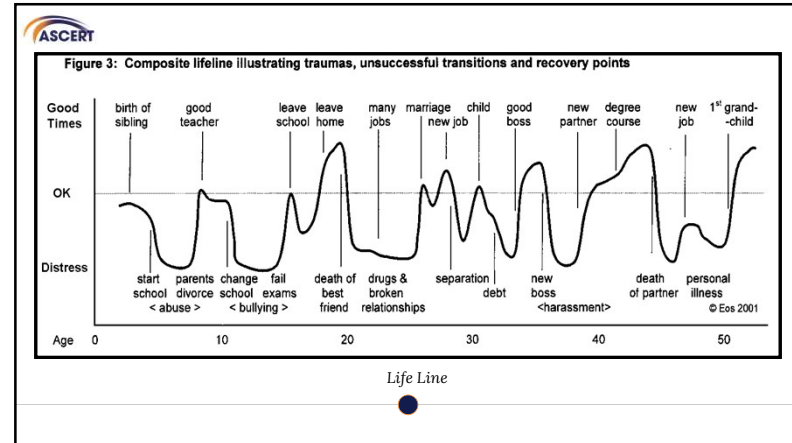
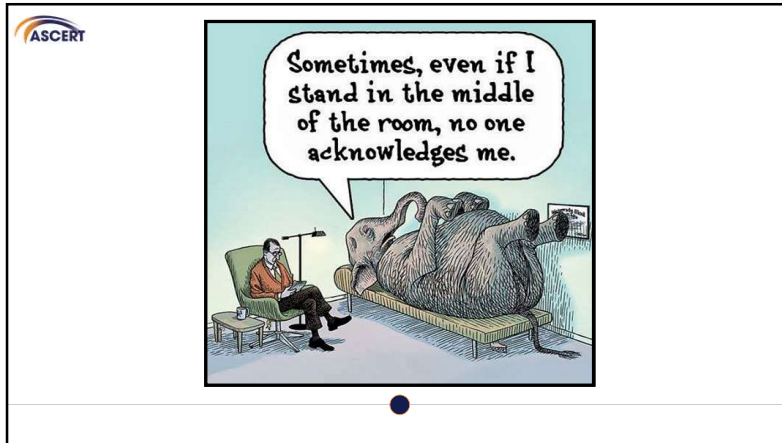
People who are grieving do not necessarily go through the stages in the same order or experience all of them.


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Effects of Bereavement

- Group 1
 - What are the short-term effects of bereavement? (1 year)
- Group 2
 - What are the medium-term effects of bereavement? (2-3 years)
- Group 3
 - What are the long-term effects of bereavement? (3+ years)






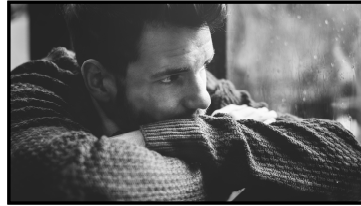
 **Understanding Bereavement**





- Separation and pain
- Grief breaks over in waves of distress
- Yearning
- Emptiness; feeling that something has been torn away
- Searching behaviours
- Dreams and/or hallucinations about the deceased are common

 **Bereavement Awareness**

- Despair
- Alternating moods
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anger
- Guilt
- Restlessness
- Extreme sadness



 **Bereavement Awareness**



- Acceptance
- Intellectual acceptance often happens before emotional acceptance
- Mood swings – to be expected, especially at anniversaries or notable family dates
- Depression is possible

 **Bereavement Awareness**

- Resolution/reorganisation
- New life patterns begin to be established
- More positive thinking about the future
- Deceased can be spoken about without being overwhelmed with sadness
- Increased focus on the world around
- Reinvestment in life



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- Remember 'More' doesn't mean every Woman, every time!
- More likely to cry, show difficulty concentrating, may become 'jumpy'
- More able to write about their feelings
- More likely to talk to friends about their feelings
- More likely to process their feelings by talking them out
- May disguise their sadness by becoming excessively caring for others

Females and Bereavement

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- Remember 'May' means not every man or every time
- May hide their feelings
- May talk with a best friend but are unlikely to discuss all the details
- Tend to mess around, use get involved with rough games or may start risk taking to deal with feelings
- Unlikely to write about their feelings but there will exceptions
- More likely to internalise their feelings
- Anger and explosive responses to frustration are more likely

Males and Bereavement


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Impacts of Bereavement

- Physical
 - Stress-related illnesses
- Emotional
 - Feeling strong, sometimes overwhelming emotions
 - Feeling out of control
- Practical
 - Change in role/status
 - Possible loss of home and friends
- Intellectual
 - There may be a threat to structure of current world and possibly a change of their world view

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Impacts of Bereavement

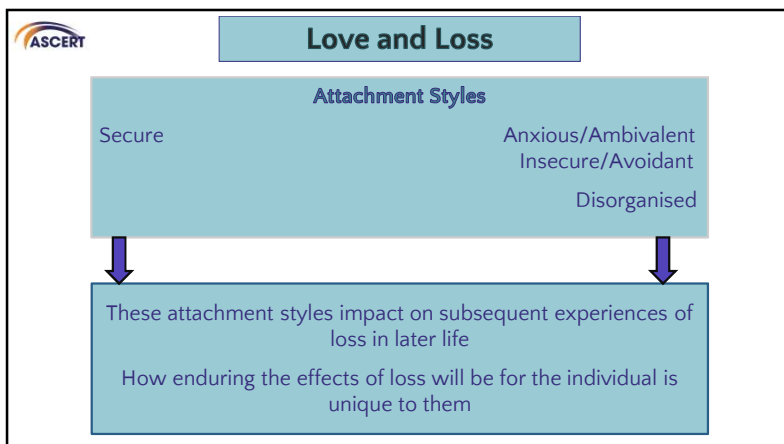


- Psychological
 - Threat to self-identity – “what is my role?”
- Behavioural
 - Changing old habit patterns and building new patterns – especially difficult if the change is forced on them
- Spiritual
 - The death can lead to a crisis of faith
 - Their meaning of life may be challenged
 - May also lead to strengthening of faith

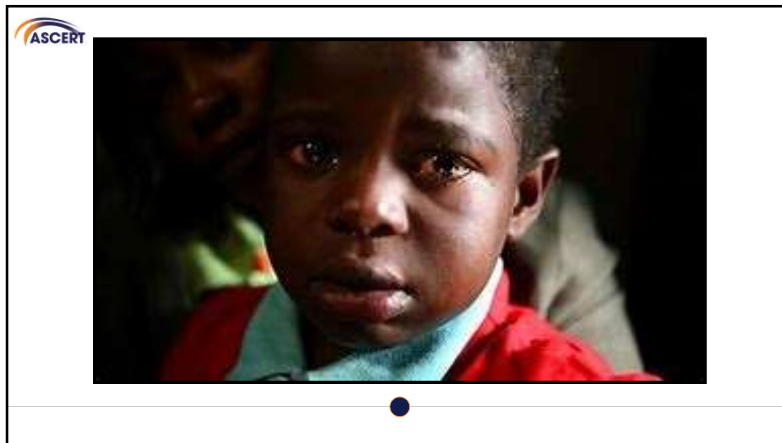
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What is magical thinking?
Give me some examples.



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- Secure Attachment**
- Attributed to those who've had a positive parental experience
 - Parents provided a measure of security and sensitivity
 - While young, they developed the ability to tolerate separation without experiencing high anxiety levels
 - Still affected by unexpected losses or separations, but tend to have better recovery experiences as adults
 - Continue to draw on past experiences of coping
 - Able to review and make sense of their "altered" life situation
 - Find new meaning in their lives



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Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment

- Where parents tended to be anxious, overprotective, or possibly insensitive to their child's developing need for independence
 - Child can grow to be anxious, an untrusting adult, and lacking self-confidence → "clinginess" can result
- May have problems separating from their parents
 - In adult relationships, "clinginess" can cause conflict
- After a bereavement, these adults tend to be highly anxious and hold onto others (possibly even you)
 - Important to encourage independence

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Avoidant Attachment

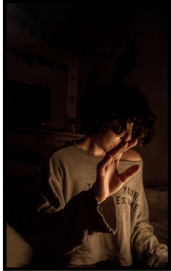
- Where parents were intolerant of closeness or emotional expression
 - Child may grow into adulthood and inhibit displays of emotion, having learned to "stand on their own two feet" from an early age
- May be intolerant of relational closeness, causing problems for them in their adult relationship
- He/she/they may appear to be independent, but be less independent than they seem



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Avoidant Attachment

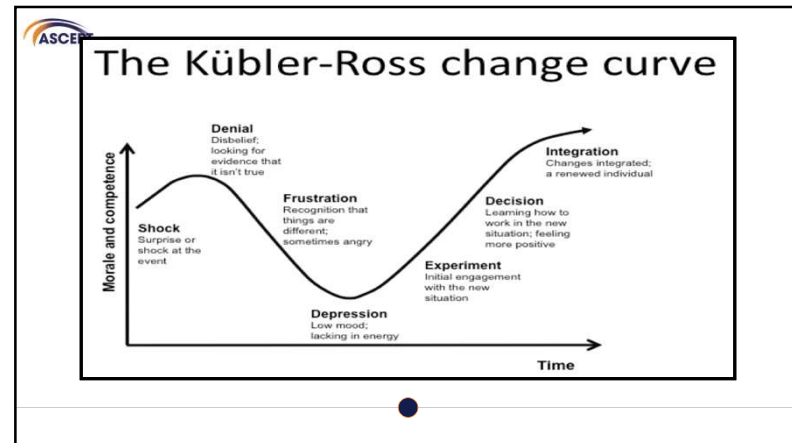
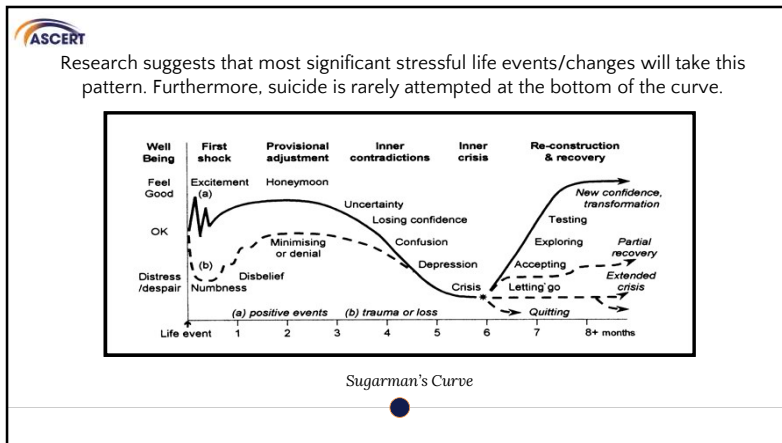
- Following a bereavement, someone with avoidant attachment will tend to inhibit displays of grief – may then appear in partial or distorted ways
- May blame themselves for their inability to show their feelings
 - Can respond well in a relationship when encouraged to do this in their own way and at their own pace
- Remember that someone's strength and independence may belie insecurity






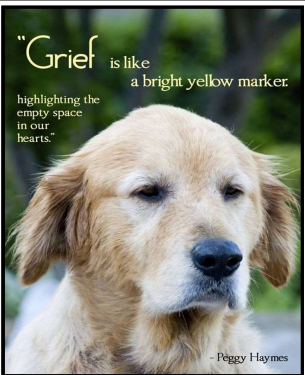
Disorganised Attachment

- If a parent has unmet emotional needs (e.g. grief or depression), they may have had hostility towards their own children or others → the child as an adult is unable to respond consistently to other adults needing a lot of nurturing/comfort
- May grow up to be a helpless adult, unhappy generally, and with little trust in themselves or others
- Bereavement may throw them into panic or despair
 - Or (more positively if they are well-supported) it can allow them to have an opportunity/new experience where they discover (perhaps for the first time) that not all people will let them down






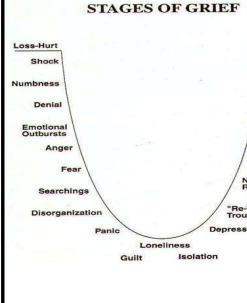
"Grief is like a bright yellow marker highlighting the empty space in our hearts."




- Peggy Haymes




STAGES OF GRIEF



My experience





A Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement
Stroebe & Schut (1982)

Everyday Life Experience

Loss-oriented

- Grief work
- Intrusion of grief
- Breaking bonds/ties
- Denial/avoidance of restoration changes

Restoration-oriented

- Attending to life changes
- Doing new things
- Distraction from grief
- Denial/avoidance of grief
- New roles/identity/relationship

in Studies 29(1):187-204


- A bereaved person is normally in a process of recovering from or working on the loss
 - Can take months or years to go through
 - Never complete and can be easily reactivated
- When someone is stuck in loss-orientation, we call this complicated grief




"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."
 — Anthony Robbins

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Understanding Bereavement



- A major bereavement affects people:
 - Physically
 - Changes in eating or sleeping habits, stress-related illness
 - Emotionally
 - Feeling strong emotions, feeling things are out of control
 - Practically
 - New arrangements for self, children, financial security?
 - Socially
 - Changes in role/status

Susan Le Poidevin

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EMOTIONAL	MENTAL	BEHAVIORAL	SPIRITUAL	PHYSICAL
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Depression <input type="checkbox"/> Despair <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganization <input type="checkbox"/> Emptiness <input type="checkbox"/> Empressness <input type="checkbox"/> Fear <input type="checkbox"/> Frustration <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt <input type="checkbox"/> Hate <input type="checkbox"/> Helplessness <input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelming feeling <input type="checkbox"/> Panic <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> Regret <input type="checkbox"/> Relief <input type="checkbox"/> Remorse <input type="checkbox"/> Resentment <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity <input type="checkbox"/> Shock	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent minded <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion <input type="checkbox"/> Denial <input type="checkbox"/> Detachment <input type="checkbox"/> Disbelief <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganized thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of concentration <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of control <input type="checkbox"/> Lowered self-esteem <input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupation <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of presence <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of unreality <input type="checkbox"/> Think you're going crazy <input type="checkbox"/> Yearning	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance <input type="checkbox"/> Carrying objects that have memories <input type="checkbox"/> Crying <input type="checkbox"/> Depersonalization <input type="checkbox"/> Dreams of deceased <input type="checkbox"/> Isolation <input type="checkbox"/> Overactivity <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness <input type="checkbox"/> Searching <input type="checkbox"/> Social withdrawal <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting places with memories	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger at the Deity <input type="checkbox"/> Closer to or more distant from the Deity <input type="checkbox"/> Exploring new dimensions of faith <input type="checkbox"/> Looking for meaning, is this the Deity's will, why is this happening to me, etc? <input type="checkbox"/> Reassessing values and beliefs <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking faith or questioning faith <input type="checkbox"/> Visions <input type="checkbox"/> Visitation	<input type="checkbox"/> Blood pressure changes <input type="checkbox"/> Blurred vision <input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea or constipation <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Digestive problems <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of energy <input type="checkbox"/> Lowered immune system <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity to light <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep disturbance <input type="checkbox"/> Stomachache <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness in throat <input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss or gain

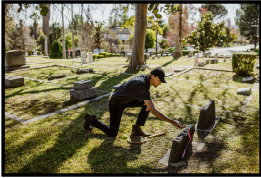
Impacts of Bereavement


Risk Factors	Low	Medium	High
Who	Friend/Colleague Pet In-law Other relative Neighbour Ex-partner Distant relationship Good relationship	Sister/Brother Very close friend Grandparent Grandchild Fiancé/Fiancée Lover Close relationship	Husband/Wife/Partner Daughter Son Mother Father Very close relationship Very dependent relationship
How	Peaceful death Time to prepare Good support	Some warning Pain controlled Some support	No warning Painful images Little support Drugs Alcohol
History	Good family roots Good at forming relationships Previous losses resolved	Some family conflict Finds it hard to make friends Unresolved losses	Deprived childhood Relationship breakdowns Past mental and physical illness Previous close shaves with death
Help	Good family and friend support Supported by faith and religious community Good Doctor/ medical support	Little family/friend support Some personal community interests Some medical support	Isolated and alone Few interests No medical support Refusal to accept help



 **Bereavement Awareness**

- Universality
 - Everything and everyone dies
 - Young people sometimes think that death may be delayed or even avoided → may struggle to accept that death cannot be avoided indefinitely
 - Young people and adults sometimes struggle with the fact that, while death is inevitable, it is not always predictable



 **Bereavement Awareness**


- Irreversible
 - The main struggle for all of us (young or old) is to understand that death is not reversible – a body cannot be restored back to life
- Non-functionality
 - Young people particularly find it difficult coming to terms with the fact that a dead person cannot feel hot or cold, eat, walk, or play

Be sensitive with this stuff – it's not your role to remove a means of comfort from anyone.


 **Bereavement Awareness**




- Causality
 - Everyone needs time to grieve and understand that death cannot be caused by thoughts, wishing, or words spoken in anger
 - Not caused by bad behaviour on our part
 - Caused by lots of things (e.g. medical problems, accidents of different kinds, a myriad of unexpected means)


 **Bereavement Awareness**

- Most people believe in the continuation of life after death (an afterlife)
 - Often held (albeit lightly in some cases) by children and adults of many faiths
 - Main tenet: continuation of the soul in Heaven, reincarnation, etc.
 - While this often brings comfort, it may result in a crisis of faith after a loved one's death
 - Never challenge anyone's belief system – rather, ask for help to understand the person's view of this afterlife, even if its description contradicts your own beliefs


 **Signs and Symptoms of Complicated Grief**


- Intense sorrow, pain, and rumination over the loss of your loved one
- Focus on little else but your loved one's death
- Extreme focus on or excessive avoidance of reminders of the loved one
- Intense and persistent longing or pining for the deceased
- Problems accepting the death




 **Signs and Symptoms of Complicated Grief**


- Numbness or detachment
- Bitterness about your loss
- Feeling that life has no meaning or purpose
- Lack of trust in others
- Inability to enjoy life or think back on positive experiences with your loved one



 **Signs and Symptoms of Complicated Grief**

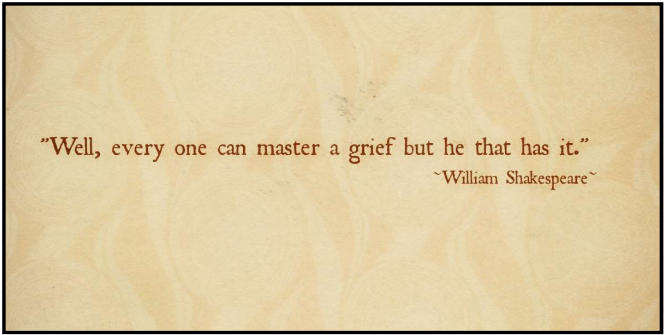
- Complicated grief may also be indicated if you continue to
 - Have trouble carrying out normal routines
 - Isolate from others and withdraw from social activities
 - Experience depression, deep sadness, guilt, or self-blame
 - Believe that you did something wrong or could have prevented the death
 - Feel life isn't worth living without your loved one
 - Wish you had died along with your loved one



 **Complicated Grief**

- Occurs more often in females and with older age
- Risk factors for developing complicated grief
 - An unexpected or violent death (e.g. death from car accident, murder, suicide)
 - Death of a child
 - Close or dependent relationship to the deceased person
 - Social isolation or loss of a support system or friendships
 - Past history of depression, separation anxiety, or PTSD
 - Traumatic childhood experiences (e.g. abuse, neglect)
 - Other major life stressors (e.g. major financial hardships)


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"Well, every one can master a grief but he that has it."
~William Shakespeare~

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Thanks!

Any questions?

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