



TRAUMATIC LOSS & COMPLICATED GRIEF

Thomas Ellis, M.A., L.M.F.T.
Author of *This Thing Called Grief*
Executive Director
Center for Grief, Loss & Transition

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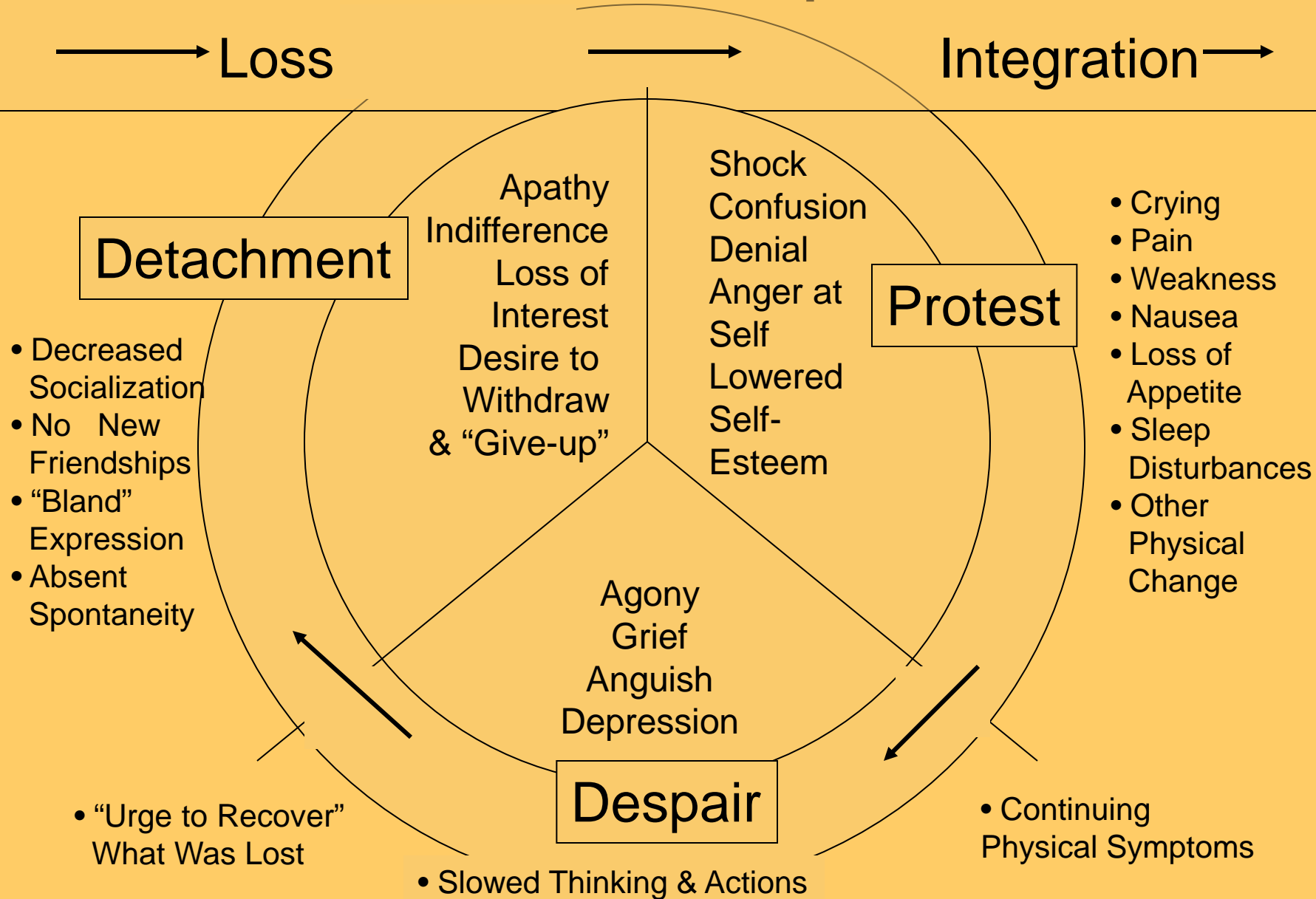
Objectives

- Identify differences between grief, complicated grief and trauma
- Discover factors which complicate grief and trauma
- Recognize Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Develop psycho-educational approaches to support traumatized individuals and families
- Identify healing concepts for living through loss

Grief Is...

An ongoing, personal process of acknowledging the life changing impact of loss. It affects the behavioral, cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of our self.

Grief Loop



What Affects Our Grief

Common Pre-Conceived Notions

- Phobic to talk about loss
- Loss creates an overwhelming sense of fear & despair, resulting in avoidance
- Open expression of grief is not tolerated. Influenced by early family experience & culture. Distract/Deny/Dominate
- Some losses are more acceptable than others. Limits open expression of thoughts and feelings
- All grief experiences are perceived as the same. Denies the uniqueness of grief
- Compare our personal grief experience to other's experience
- Grief should be kept private and personal
- Professional/Psych. Parameters-bereavement v code defers to major depressive disorder 2 months after death. Control/Manage/Medicate.
- "Negative" emotions are harmful.....

Complicated Grief

- Type of loss: multiple, traumatic, sudden
- Grief doesn't change
- The grief interferes with ability to function
- Seem to function as though nothing has changed
- Self-Esteem stays at a low level
- Guilt and/or anger overwhelms
- Withdrawal from others
- Frequent thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else
- Suicide attempts

Complicated Grief cont.

- Cope with loss through addictive behavior
 - Self-recognized depression
 - Develop destructive and/or risk-taking behaviors
 - Recurring flashbacks
 - Loss of will to live
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- A HEIGHTENED RESPONSE EXPRESSED IN A MULTITUDE OF WAYS RANGING FROM WITHDRAWAL TO A FEELING OF RAGE.

Common Trauma Reactions

- **Extreme** feelings of helplessness
- Loss of sense of control and safety
- Rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Trembling
- Inability to concentrate
- Increased irritability
- Hypervigilance
- Sense of shock
- Curiosity about details of the event
- Preoccupation
- **Heightened levels** of guilt, blaming, fear and anxiety
- Feelings of retribution & anger
- Short fused
- Inability to accept the loss
- Unable to recall all events

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one or more ways:

- Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event
- Recurrent distressing dreams of the event
- Acting or feeling as if the event is recurring (flashbacks)
- Intense distress to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event

Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness in three or more ways:

- Avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
- Efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- Markedly diminished interest in significant activities
- Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
- Restricted range of affect
- Sense of foreshortened future

Persistent symptoms of increased arousal by two or more:

- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Exaggerated startle response

Differences Between Grief and Trauma

Grief

- May include some preparation
- Previous experiences may exist
- A sense of shock
- Little stigma involved
- Commonly experienced
- Little sense of victimization

Trauma

- No time of preparation
- Usually no experience
- Strong sense of trauma
- Great stigma
- Rarely experienced
- Multiple victimization

Differences Between Grief and Trauma

Grief

- Shorter time in crisis
- Emotional impact
- Disrupts life
- Grieving process begins
- Social supports
- Limited system interaction

Trauma

- Prolonged sense of crisis
- Intense emotional impact
- Multiple/complicated changes
- Grief is delayed
- Isolation
- Multiple system interaction

A Healing Process

Restoring a Sense of Safety and Control

- Requires an intentional approach to seek support
Family Therapy
- Reduction of isolation through nurturing behavior and self-care
- Attention focused on calm environment, exercise and rest
- Focus on a plan to cope, make decisions and act

Re-telling of the Story

- Contact with supportive people
- “***Debriefing***” with a professional as needed
- Fact Finding – What happened...
- Detailing of the event – before, during, after
- Externalization: Focus on moving the experience outside of ones self with **words**
- Activity required for healing through **actions** and **rituals**

Reconnecting

- Embracing/Nurturing the grief/despair
- Create a meaning making plan to integrate the experience
- Tasks to include sharing the story through words and writing
- Return to daily tasks and a sense of empowerment
- Requires a new awareness of personal strengths and hopefulness

HEALING CONCEPTS: WHAT HELPS US THROUGH GRIEF?

- Companions for the journey
- Giving time for your grief
- Permission for expression of thoughts and feelings
- Becoming an expert in your experience
- Naming what has been lost and what has not
- Self Kindness
- Embracing imperfection
- Creating places of sanctuary
- Embracing the grief, fear and despair of loss
- Feeling validated about your experience and new realities
- Explore a sense of Hopefulness
- To be positively challenged in your process

Self Care

S Simplify & Seek
Support

E Establish a
Place of
Sanctuary

L Let Go &
Embrace a
Sense of Hope

F Feel your
Feelings

C Challenge Yourself
& Celebrate with
Play and Humor

A Ask For Help &
Acknowledge your
Reality

R Rest & Relaxation

E Exercise & Eat
Well