

Good Grief: What's Happening to Me?

Presenter: Peter Morel – Coordinating Chaplain, St Andrew's Hospital

- **What buttons are being pushed?**
- ***What is grief (every transition costs)***

Grief is a multi-faceted response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or something to which a bond was formed. Although conventionally focused on the emotional response to loss, it also has physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and philosophical dimensions.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grief

Prince William when visiting Christchurch after the earthquakes quoted his grandmother saying "Grief is the price we pay for love"

- ***Group Response - for possible causes of grief.....***

Examples of causes – loss of purpose, loss of the ability to participate in life at later stage (i.e. Parkinson's disease, Dementia), infertility, divorce, loss of a job, loss of health, loss of independence, future loss (eg. seeing daughter get married), children leaving home, relocation etc.

- ***What does grief look/feel like? (OHP Illustration)***

Grief allows us to cope with an acute loss so that it may be more manageable or less overwhelming
There is no one way to grieve

Group Response – “symptoms” of grief

What does grief feel and / or look like?

"I feel like I am unravelling" said Grandy "I'm mad. I'm confused. I can't make any decisions. Nobody can make me feel good. I'm a mess. I just didn't realise it would be this hard (Tear Soup, p.24)

Example of "symptoms" - sadness, depression, loneliness, guilt frustration, shock, denial etc
Physical symptoms – crying, poor concentration, unable to focus, distracted by everyday matters, "hollow" feeling, not hungry etc

- **Stages of grief - See handout**
- **Unresolved grief**
- **Empathy VS Sympathy**

We need to understand the difference between "empathy" & "sympathy"

Both words have the same Greek root – "pathos" – which means "suffering". The difference between the two words is subtle with the inference being that to 'empathise' is to enter into the other's experience sufficiently to understand their suffering, whereas sympathy infers feeling the suffering of the others as one's own, leading to pity for the other person. (www.allhd.com.au/grief)

The danger of 'sympathy' is that we make another person's 'more than I can bear losses' our own. If we over identify with a person's pain we may not be able to provide the necessary objectivity required to help this person

What do I say

Strategies for helping others







- Active listening
- Reassure that it is OK to feel angry, upset & teary (gives a person permission to feel this way)
- These are all normal ways to grieve (normalises grief)
- Accept their feelings without judgement
- Don't be afraid to talk about a person who has died or with the family
- Don't distract with small talk (avoidance)
- Include others

▪ Self care



Good diet, sleep, exercise, life balance, don't rely on alcohol / drugs for 'comfort'.

Expressing feelings – talk to another, complete a journal, counsellor, mentor

RESOURCES

-  Tear Soup - Good Grief (*Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlye, 1999*)
-  The Fall of Freddie the Leaf (Leo Buscaglia, Slack Publishing, 1982)
-  Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge (Mem Fox; Omnibus Books, 1984)
-  Tough Boris (Mem Fox, Puffin Books. 1998)
-  The Goblin and the Empty Chair (Mem Fox, Penguin/Viking, 2009)
-  Beginnings and Endings with LIFETIMES in between (Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen, 1983)

Palliative Care Australia - Website

-  Now what? Understanding Grief
-  What can I say – What can I do?