Grieving:
An Individual Journey

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Transitions in life include those we chose and those we do not chose to experience

- Change means loss

- Loss means grief
WHAT DOES GRIEF LOOK LIKE?

Physical reactions

Fatigue
Lethargy
Insomnia
Appetite changes/weight loss or gain
Affected dreams

Aches/pains and dry mouth
Sudden racing heart
Nervousness
Hives and other skin conditions
Risk for stress-related illnesses
WHAT DOES GRIEF FEEL LIKE?

Emotional Reactions

Anger
Sadness
Numbness
Helplessness - Hopelessness
Feelings of guilt
Feelings of blame
Feelings of resentment
INFLUENCES ON GRIEF

• Personality

• Family

• Culture
WHAT NEGATIVELY AFFECTS GRIEF?

Limited support system

Judgments from others

Self judgments

Protecting others
• Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
  Denial
    Anger
    Bargaining
    Depression
  Acceptance

Taking care not to categorize or label
When the Death is Sudden

suicide                         shooting
vehicle accident

The story is harder to tell

INTEGRATING WITH REALITY
Grief vs. Major Depression

• **Shared Symptoms**
  Lethargy, sadness, insomnia, loss of appetite

• **Duration and Intensity**
  Grief reactions fluctuate and diminish over time, major depression maintains intensity and can be diagnosed after 2 months

• **Suicide Ideation – Intent vs. Wishing**
Rituals

• Few meaningful rituals in this culture

• What happens if established rituals do not work for an individual?

• What happens down the road?

*Honoring holidays & special occasions*
Grief and Spirituality

Belief system as support

Different or no belief system

Judgment of feelings

Norms of spiritual community
THE IDENTITY OF THE GRIEVER

- Caregiver with anticipatory grief
- Grief as the last connection to the loved one.
- Integrating the grief with the whole history of the loved one.
- Being “a griever” as opposed to a wife, daughter, husband, son, etc. who is grieving
PAST
“If Only”
“I Should Have”

PRESENT
DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

FUTURE
“What If”

GUILT

CONCERN/ worry

SHAME

GETTING STUCK IMMOBILIZED

ANXIETY
• Forgiveness
  – It’s about ‘letting go’
  – Forgiving others or forgiving self

• Guilt
  – What do I do with it?
  – Is it real or not?

• Know that you are ‘normal’
  – Ok, so what is normal?
What Helps Smooth the Road?

• Talking
  – Telling one’s story
  – Letting others know what you need

• Writing it down
  – Journal
  – Write a letter
Stress Management

- The more relaxed the body – the more relaxed the mind.

- Exercise

- Stretch

- Hydration

- Express yourself

- Self talk

- Positive imagery
So What About Us?

• How can we best serve those around us who are grieving?
  – Don’t ‘fix it’ or ‘make it go away’
  – Let them be where they need to be
  – Acknowledging your own grief
The Look of Grief Down the Road

• Trust yourself and the process

• The end of grief does not mean forgetting the person

• Finding a different kind of normal