

2-MINUTE TIP: 12 FACES OF GRIEF

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Loss is universal and frequent in our lives, therapists start working with grief practically from the beginning of training. The first 4 patterns below cut across all types of loss.

1. Normal - Uncomplicated - healthy, adaptive response to loss that gradually resolves, person integrates the loss into life, replacing functions of the lost relationship with new outlets, finds new relationship to the lost person. Tx: Give support, psychoeducation, normalization, facilitation of mourning tasks, monitoring.

2. Delayed - Postponed - Conscious avoidance or inhibition of mourning tasks, often under social or familial pressure to “stay strong.” Often in the one who arranges the ceremonies, taking no time for self. May experience emotional numbness or somatization.

3. Distorted - Exaggerated - May not accept the reality of the loss, perhaps odd or eccentric responses, may lose reality testing, or may be dramatic or inconsolable.

4. Chronic - Persistent - Prolonged - intense grief unabated for a year/years without much symptom reduction, even depression. Tx: find underlying theme, identify complex relationship to the lost person & then help re-engage in new world without the lost person.

5. Anticipatory - Expecting a loss, grieving ‘in advance’ rather than after. Also applies to expecting one’s own death from a terminal illness. Origin of the 5 stages - shock/denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. (E Kübler-Ross, 1969).

6. Secondary - Vicarious - Compassionate - Empathic - Grief for another’s suffering—common among therapists, first responders, caregivers - e.g., witnessing suffering (e.g., refugees, war, violence), empathic identification rather than personal attachment.

7. Traumatic Grief - complicated by trauma symptoms due to the sudden, violent, or horrific nature of the death. Tx: therapy integrates trauma work and mourning, exposure.

8. Masked Grief - instead of outward mourning, emotion repression, feeling sadness indirectly through behavior or physical symptoms, irritability, overwork, substance use, physical ailments.

9. Disenfranchised - Unacknowledged Grief - 2 meanings: A: hidden losses others cannot perceive in one’s life (e.g., aging, identity change, infertility, loss of faith, chronic illness with loss of capacities). B. socially unsanctioned losses (e.g., grief over loss of a colleague, loss of an affair partner, loss of a pet) others may not comprehend.

10. Ambiguous Loss -- presumed losses, lacking clear ending or closure (e.g., ghosting by a loved one, disappearance, POW)

11. Cumulative - Multiple Grief - having overlapping grief experiences from 2 or more losses, without time to recover between. E.g., multiple deaths, repeated foster placements, or job losses.

12. Communal-Collective Collective or Communal Grief - shared loss (e.g., natural disasters, shootings, pandemics), loss that has communal meaning. If you were cognizant 11/22-11/27/1963, you were likely part of American collective shock at the loss of JFK.

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