

Lecture 6
Module 2 of 7
**Disenfranchised Grief/
Complicated Grief**

Disenfranchised Grief
**Grief that is experienced
when a loss is not or cannot
be:**

- **Openly acknowledged**
- **Publicly mourned**
- **Socially supported**

Doka (1989). Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow.

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)

**Examples of Loss Not
Recognized (loss itself not
deemed socially significant)**

- **Perinatal Death**
- **Abortion**
- **Giving Up a Child for Adoption,
Foster Care**

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)

Examples of Loss Not Recognized (loss itself not deemed socially significant)

- Surrogate Motherhood
- Separation, Divorce
- Pet Loss



Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)

Examples of Griever Not Recognized (griever not socially defined as capable of grief)

- Young Children
- Mentally Disabled
- Aged Individuals
- Incarcerated

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)

Examples of Relationships Not Recognized (society defines “legitimate” grievers as primarily familial)

- Extramarital
- Cohabitation
- Gay/Lesbian
- Neighbor

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)

**Examples of Relationships
Not Recognized** (society
defines “legitimate” grievers
as primarily familial)

- Colleague
- Roommates (as in nursing homes)
- Teachers/School Personnel
- Healthcare providers

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)
Additions (2002)

Circumstances of the Death

- Nature of the death
 - (suicide, AIDS)
- Death that provoke anxiety or embarrassment
 - (autoerotic asphyxiation, execution of prisoner)

Disenfranchised Grief (cont.)
Additions (2002)

Ways Individuals Grieve

- Intuitive
 - (feeling)
- Instrumental
 - (cognitive, physical, behavioral)

**“Normal” vs. Complicated
Grief Reactions**

- **Dependent on many factors**
 - Type of relationship with the deceased
 - When there is attachment, there is grieving.
 - Negative ties bind just as strongly as positive ties.

**“Normal” vs. Complicated
Grief Reactions (cont.)**

- **Dependent on many factors**
 - **Death circumstances**
 - Personality/coping skills
 - Life circumstances
 - Concurrent stressors
 - Financial problems
 - Physical/mental status

Rule of Thumb:

***Can or can't manage
day-to-day living.**



**High Risk Factors for
Complicated Grieving
(Mourning)**

- Suddenness
- Violence, mutilation, destruction
- Preventability, randomness
- Multiple death
- Personal threat of death (robbery, survivor of airline crash)

**High Risk Factors for
Complicated Grieving
(Mourning) (cont.)**

- Shocking encounters of death of others (see burning bodies)
- Antecedent variables
 - difficult premorbid relationship with the deceased
 - previous or concurrent losses
- Specific types of death such as loss of a child

Reminder/Red Flag:

**Assure adequate medical care -
assess for PTSD**

**Issues Related to
Death Circumstances**

Sudden vs. Expected Death



Sudden Death:

- **No preparation**
- **No goodbye**
- **Unfinished business**

Sudden Death: Suicide

- **Overwhelms the survivors**
- **Sense of unreality**
- **Search for the Why?**
- **Sense of helplessness**
- **Feelings of rejection, abandonment**

Sudden Death: Suicide (cont.)

- Issue of “preventability”
- Feelings of guilt, anger, rage
- Feelings of extreme vulnerability
- Unfinished business

Sudden Death: Homicide

- Feelings related to the senselessness, brutality of the act
- Fright related to rage at person who committed the act, sometimes desire to violently destroy this person
- Feelings of fear, loss of control, violation

Sudden Death: Homicide (cont.)

- Heightened sense of personal vulnerability
- Involvement with judicial system “secondary victimization”
- Media involvement which is often personally intrusive

Sudden Death: Homicide (cont.)

- **Prolonged, intense period of rumination to work it through (why?)**

Note: This type of death and the involvement of the legal system (often over a period of years) places the survivors at higher risk for complicated grief.

Accident

- **Many of the same issues apply:**
 - **No goodbye**
 - **Range of emotions**
 - **Involvement of media, police, courts**
 - **Unfinished business**

End of Module 2
