

Personality and Grief: A Unique Perspective of Mutual Impact

NHPCO Bereavement Chat
May 1, 2019

Today's Speaker



Paula Bunn,
LMFT, FT
• The Elizabeth
Hospice

Learning Objectives

1

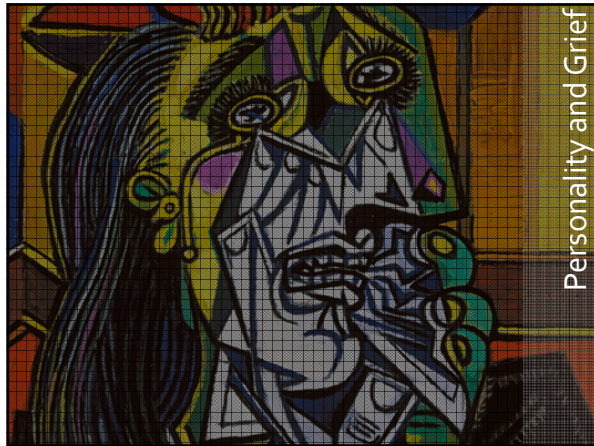
Explain and demonstrate the mutual impact of grief and personality styles

2

Predict instances in which bereavement could diminish the ability to function among those with rigid personality styles

3

Identify a practical approach for supporting those whose personality is a significant factor in the healing process



Personality and Grief

What is GRIEF?

an individualized and normal response to loss

the inward experience of a loss

Grief has emotional, cognitive, physical, behavioral, social, and philosophical/spiritual dimensions.

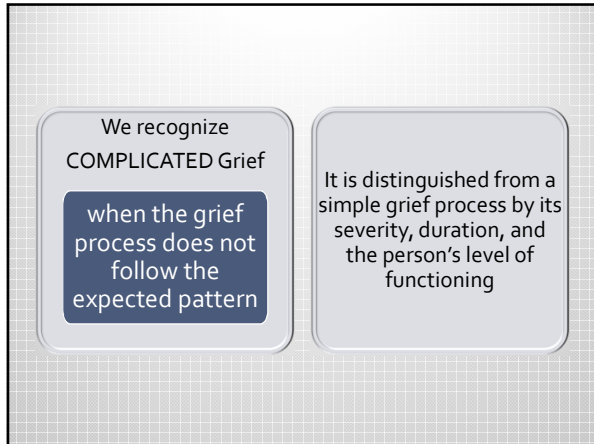
What do we mean by BEREAVEMENT ?

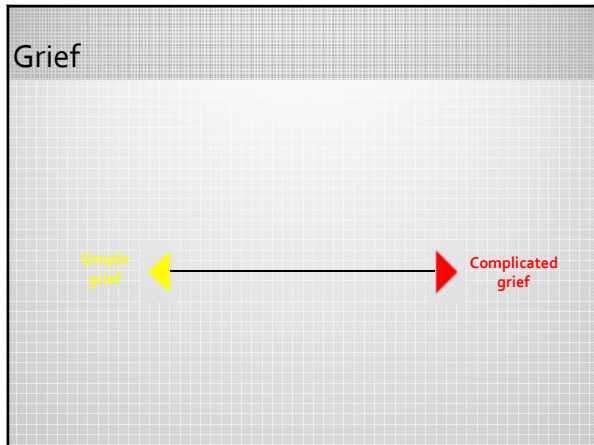
a state of living with a loss

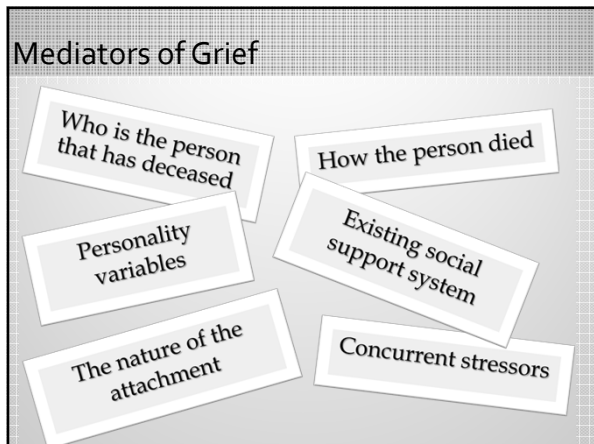
a state of having experienced the death of someone to whom one feels attached

the adjustment that results from that loss

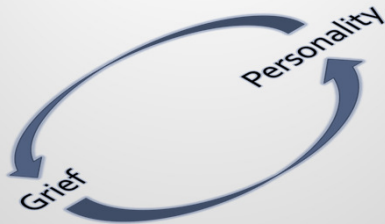
a normal process a person goes through when someone dies.

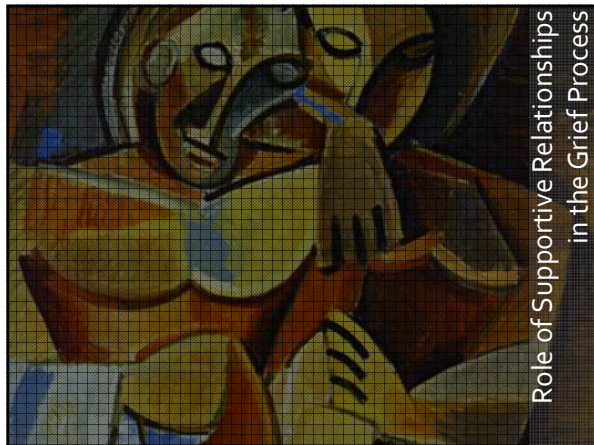






Personality and Grief





Role of Supportive Relationships

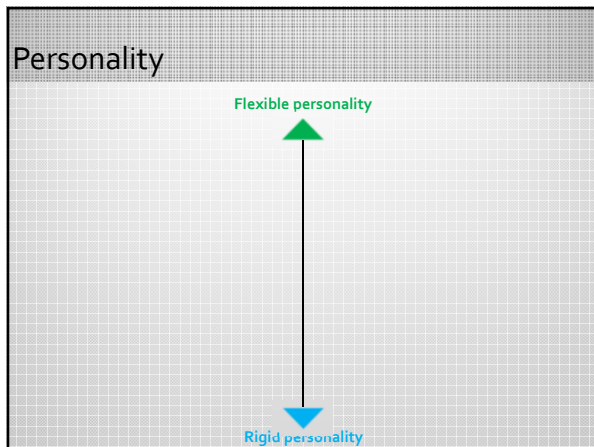
The degree of perceived emotional and social support from others is significant in the grieving process.

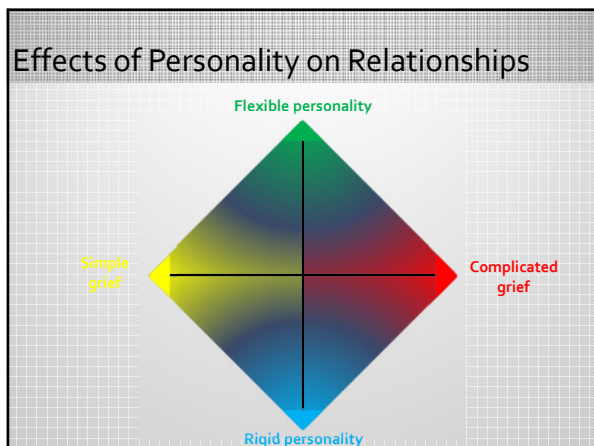
While social support can lessen the blow of a loss, it does not accelerate the grief process.




(Worden, 2009)









Case Study & Interventions

"Joseph"

Demographics

- Joseph was a 72 year-old, Caucasian, heterosexual, widowed male
- Spouse/Patient, died after 16 days on hospice service
- Married 23 years (3rd marriage); 1 adult stepson
- High socioeconomic status
- No spiritual belief system
- Atypical course of counseling in hospice context: 2 years and 2 months

Presenting Problems

- Initial assessment: High bereavement risk
- No appetite, Losing weight, Insomnia
- Anxious, Lonely, Overt anger, Short-term memory loss
- Risk factors for complicated grief:
Living alone, inadequate coping skills, familial conflict, impacted by stepson's reported chemical dependency
And – avoided internal grief process by projecting anger and blaming stepson.

Personality Traits, Behaviors & Strengths

Arrogant	Demanding	Lack of empathy	Entitled
Poor problem-solving behaviors	Saw others as "letting (him) down"	Accepted no responsibility for relational conflict	
Blame-shifting	"Victim"	Rigid	Intelligent
Poor communication skills	Excessive story-telling in graphic detail	"Self-righteous"	Attractive

Approach and Interventions

- Managing vs treating his personality style
- Most important factor: Ability to form a relationship with therapist
- Other factors that contributed to success:
 - Time (2 years)
 - Motivated (eventually)
 - Could partially acknowledge his role (eventually)

Approach and Interventions

- Tolerated transference & countertransference
- Patient with storytelling and pace
- Accepted client's reason for counseling
- Not overly nurturing; not overly attached stance

Approach and Interventions

- Avoided trying to prove a point or criticize
- Avoided confronting his "specialness"
- Allowed him to "teach" or "enlighten" me
- Chose one behavior & ignored other behavior/personality deficits
- Framed solutions as ways of getting what he wanted

Summary of Therapeutic Approach

- 1 Behavioral techniques
 - Reinforcement
 - Extinction
- 2 Conversational techniques
 - Questions that helped him see consequences
 - Constructive feedback after support & empathy
- 3 Diagnostic Reframing
 - Reframed desired behavior as a better version of his personality style

Summary and Conclusions



Summary and Conclusions

Helpful interventions:

- Behavioral Techniques
- Conversational Techniques
- Diagnostic Reframing

(Lester/Cross Country Education, G. 2014. Personality disorders and the DSM-5. Brentwood, TN: Cross Country Education)

Next Steps



Questions?



References

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Acknowledgment

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Contact Information

Paula Bunn, LMFT, FT
paula.bunn@ehospice.org

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