



Grief, Loss, & Resilience

Lesson Overview

Goal: To offer a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of grief and loss and to provide PCS participants with concrete strategies for supporting people experiencing grief

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the experience of grief
2. Learn about the variety of losses that can initiate a grief reaction
3. Learn about the different types of grief
4. Learn some basic approaches for responding effectively to people who are grieving
5. Learn about and foster resilience in grieving people



Your Own Experience with Grief & Loss

What is Grief?

“Grief is the simple shorthand we use for what is actually a highly complex mixture of thoughts and feelings related to the loss of anything to which we are attached: people and animals, objects, situations.” —Alan Wolfelt

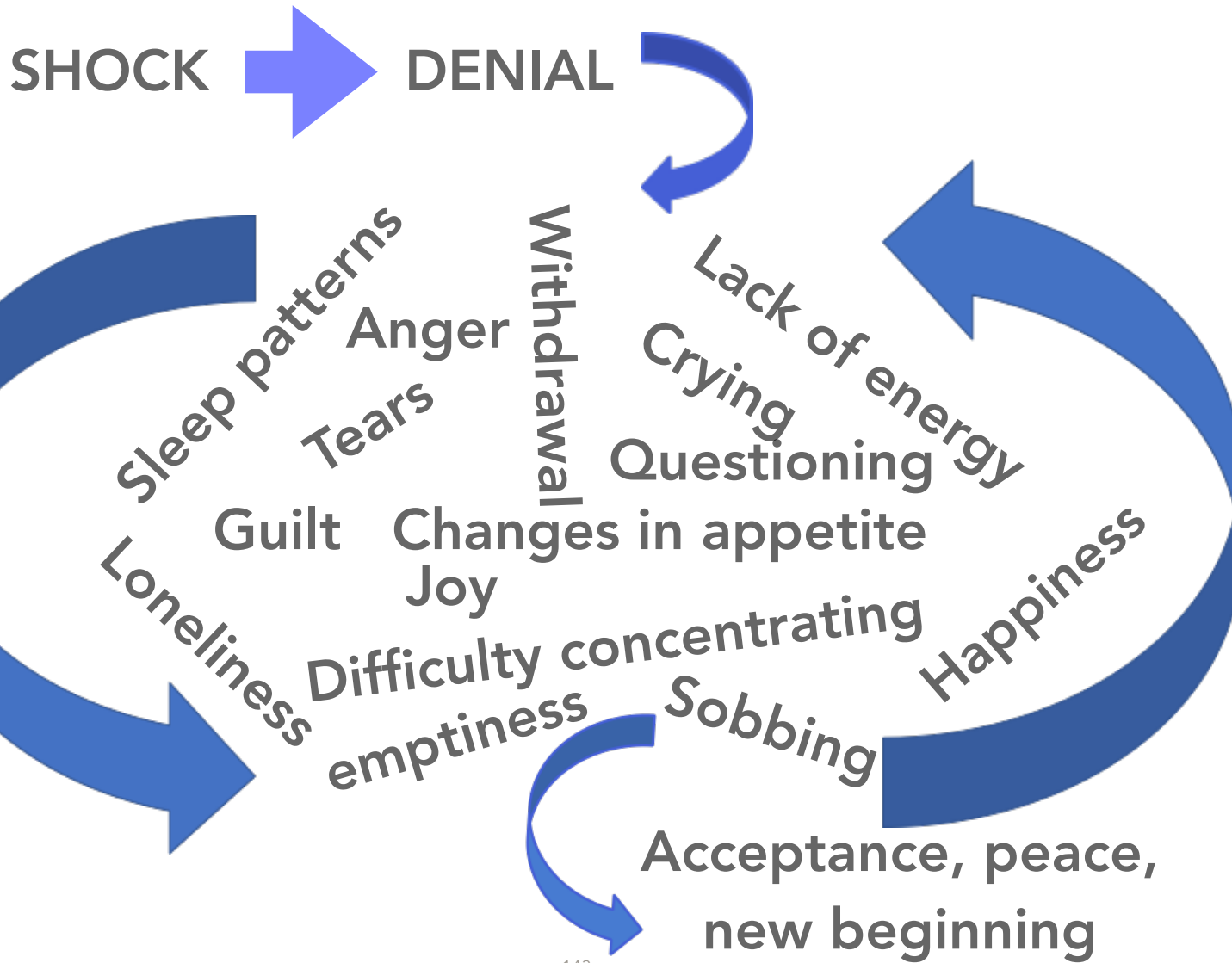
Changes occur in every aspect of our personhood:

- ▶ Thoughts/Cognition
- ▶ Emotions/Feeling states
- ▶ Physical/body
- ▶ Spiritual/theological
- ▶ Behavior



What Does Grief Look Like?

SHOCK → DENIAL



Losses

Loved ones

Home

Retirement

Divorce

Move

Unemployment

Mental illness

Physical illness

Empty nest

Unfulfilled expectations

Lack of Companionship

Loss of friendship

Loss of mobility

Loss of independence

Loss of purpose

Financial instability / Destitution



Types of Grief

- 
- "Normal" Grief
 - Anticipatory Grief
 - Disenfranchised Grief
 - Complicated Grief

"Normal" Grief

- ▶ The loss is expected
- ▶ The bereaved has had time to prepare emotionally
- ▶ The deceased experienced peacefulness or limited suffering leading up to the death
- ▶ This type of grief is predictable in duration
- ▶ Profound sadness

John 11

WHEN JESUS ARRIVED HE FOUND THAT LAZARUS HAD ALREADY BEEN IN THE TOMB FOR FOUR DAYS. NOW BETHANY WAS NEAR JERUSALEM, ABOUT TWO MILES AWAY AND MANY OF THE JEWS HAD COME TO MARTHA AND MARY TO CONSOLE THEM ABOUT THEIR BROTHER. WHEN MARTHA HEARD THAT JESUS WAS COMING, SHE WENT OUT TO MEET HIM, WHILE MARY STAYED AT HOME. WHEN MARTHA CAME TO JESUS SHE SAID TO HIM "IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED." WHEN MARY CAME TO JESUS SHE KNELT AT HIS FEET AND ALSO SAID "IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED." WHEN JESUS SAW HER AND ALL THOSE GATHERED WEeping, HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED AND ASKED "WHERE HAVE YOU LAID HIM?" AND SO THEY TOOK JESUS TO WHERE THEY HAD LAID LAZARUS. *WHEN JESUS ARRIVED AT THE TOMB HE BEGAN TO WEEP. THOSE WHO WERE GATHERED SAID "LOOK HOW HE LOVED HIM!"*



Anticipatory Grief



*Grieving before a loss
has happened*

What Types of Losses Result in Anticipatory Grief?

- ▶ Serious Illness (yourself or someone you love)
- ▶ Terminal Diagnosis (yourself or someone you love)
- ▶ Diagnosis and Course of Dementia
- ▶ Alcohol or Drug Addiction

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

STAGES OF GRIEF

Shock

Denial

Anger & Guilt

Despair & Depression

Acceptance

A blue-tinted photograph of a person in a suit hugging another person in a church setting. The person in the foreground is seen from behind, wearing a dark suit jacket and a white shirt. They are embracing another person whose face is partially visible. The background shows other people seated in pews, suggesting a church or funeral home environment. The overall mood is somber and emotional.

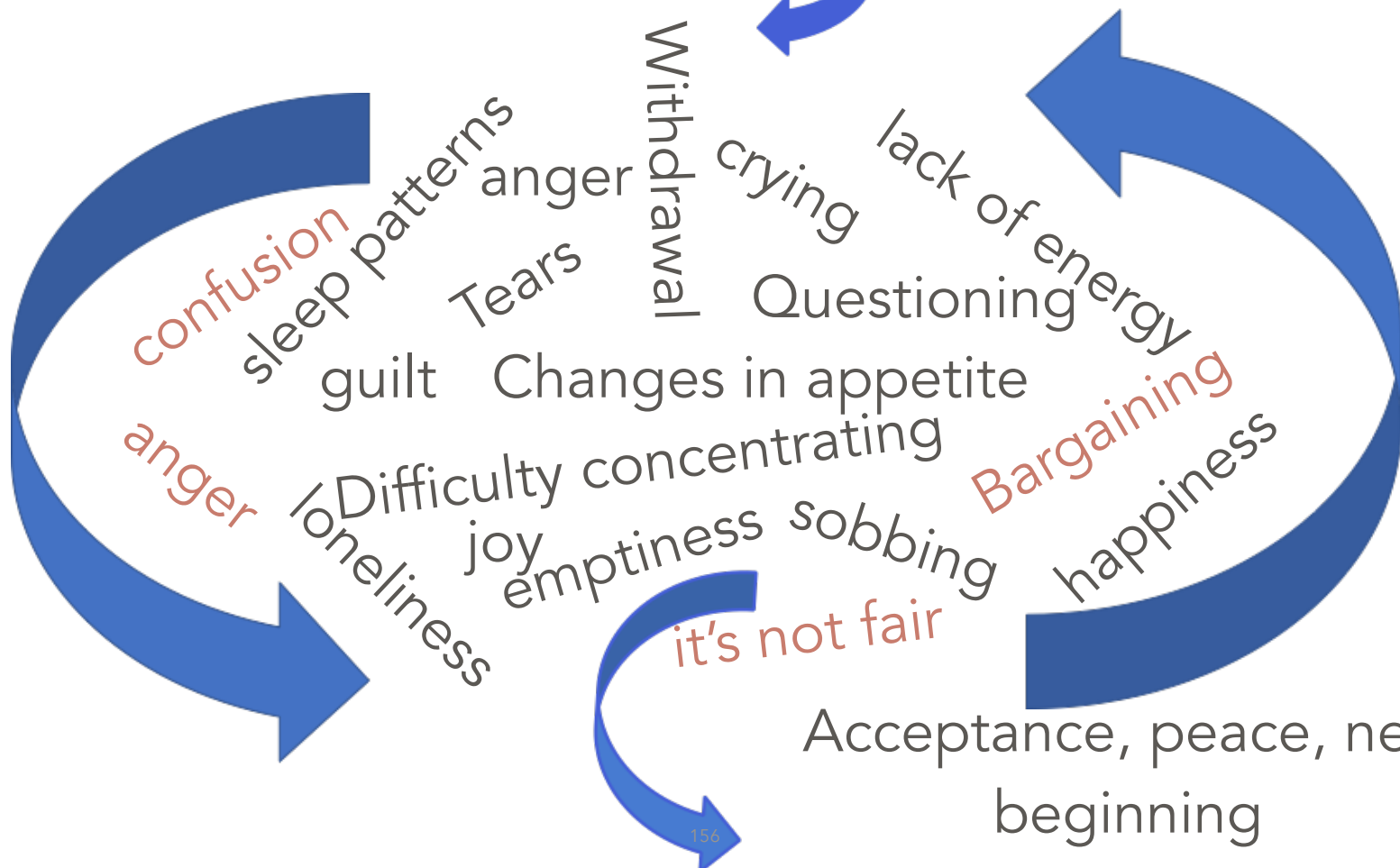
What Does Anticipatory Grief Look Like?

SHOCK → DENIAL

SHOCK → DENIAL



SHOCK → DENIAL



Matthew 26:36-46

THEN JESUS WENT WITH THEM TO A PLACE CALLED GETHSEMANE AND HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES "SIT HERE WHILE I GO OVER THERE AND PRAY." HE TOOK WITH HIM PETER, JAMES AND JOHN AND BEGAN TO BE GRIEVED AND AGITATED. THEN HE SAID TO THEM " I AM DEEPLY GRIEVED, EVEN TO DEATH; REMAIN HERE AND STAY AWAKE WITH ME." GOING A LITTLE FARTHER HE THREW HIMSELF ON THE GROUND AND PRAYED "FATHER, IF IT IS POSSIBLE, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME. BUT NOT MY WILL BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE." THEN HE RETURNED TO PETER, JAMES AND JOHN AND HE SAID TO THEM, "COULD YOU NOT STAY AWAKE WITH ME ONE HOUR? STAY AWAKE AND PRAY THAT YOU NOT COME INTO THE TIME OF TRIAL. THE SPIRIT IS WILLING BUT THE FLESH IS WEAK." HE WENT AWAY FOR THE SECOND TIME AND PRAYED "FATHER IF THIS CANNOT PASS UNLESS I DRINK OF IT THEN YOUR WILL BE DONE." AGAIN HE RETURNED TO THEM AND FOUND THEM SLEEPING, SO HE WENT AWAY AND PRAYED FOR THE THIRD TIME, SAYING THE SAME WORDS. THEN HE RETURNED TO THE DISCIPLES AND SAID TO THEM, "ARE YOU STILL SLEEPING AND TAKING YOUR REST? SEE, THE HOUR IS AT HAND AND THE SON OF MAN IS BETRAYED INTO THE HANDS OF SINNERS. GET UP, LET US BE GOING, SEE MY BETRAYER IS AT HAND"



Disenfranchised Grief



*Grief that is not recognized
or acknowledged by others*

Disenfranchised Grief

Occurs When

- ▶ A Loss is not recognized
- ▶ The relationship was not recognized or seen as vital
- ▶ The griever is not recognized

(Kenneth Doka)

Disenfranchised Grief

Relationships not always perceived as important

- ▶ Death of an Ex
- ▶ Death of a Coworker
- ▶ Death of a Pet
- ▶ Death of an Online Friend
- ▶ Death of a Same-Sex Partner
- ▶ Miscarriage or Stillborn Birth
- ▶ Death of a Stepchild or Stepparent
- ▶ Death of a Foster Child or Foster Parent
- ▶ Death of Other Non-Blood Relationships—Friends, Significant Other, In-laws, Neighbors, etc.

Disenfranchised Grief Stigmatized by Society

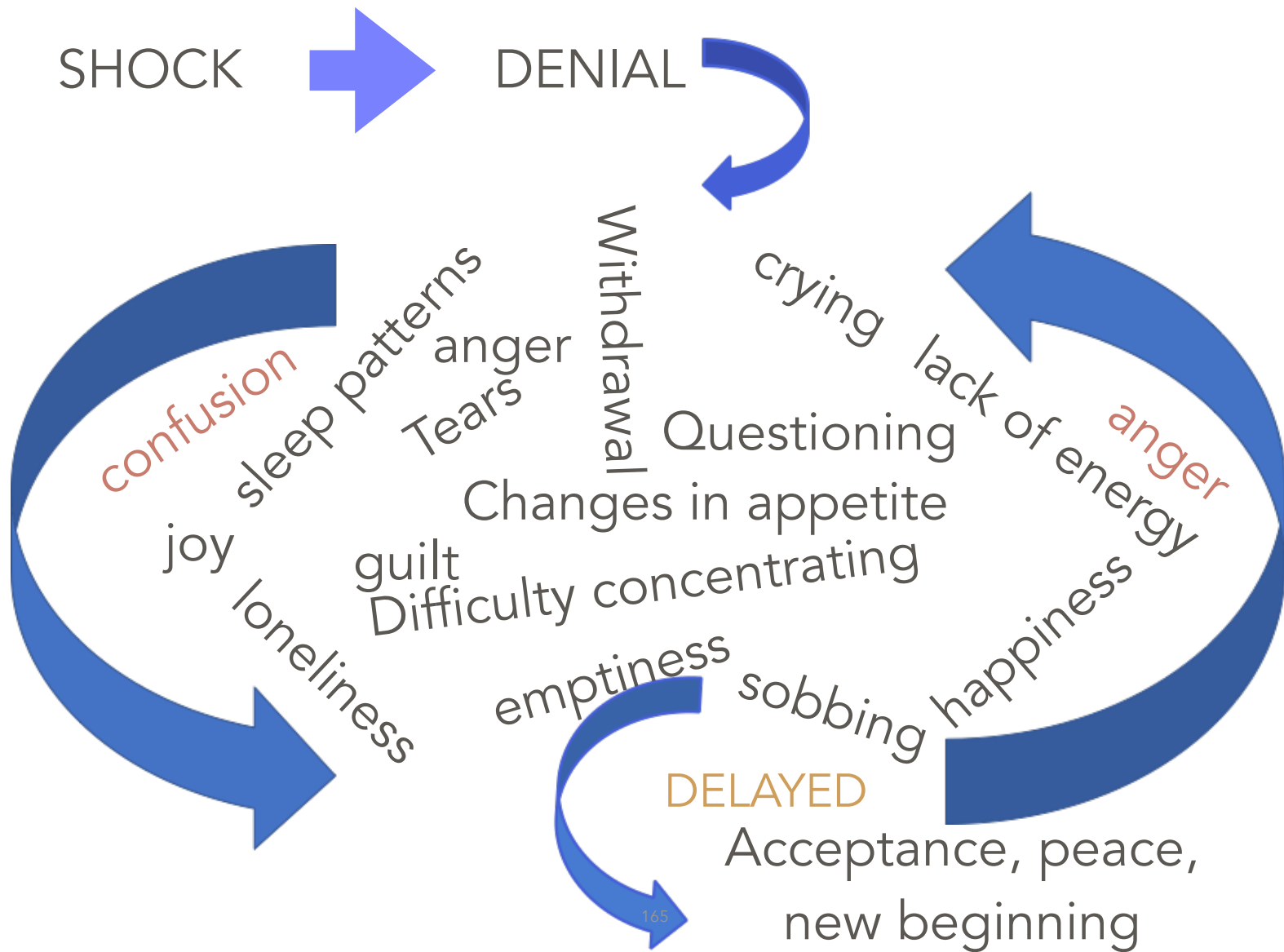
- ▶ Death by Suicide
- ▶ Death by Accidental Overdose
- ▶ Death by Child Abuse
- ▶ Death to HIV/AIDS
- ▶ Abortion
- ▶ Death Due to Drunk Driving
- ▶ Death of a Family Member in Prison
- ▶ Death of a Partner from an Extramarital Affair
- ▶ Death of a Same-sex Partner

Disenfranchised Grief Not a "Death"

- ▶ Dementia
- ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ▶ Mental Illness
- ▶ Infertility
- ▶ Substance Abuse
- ▶ Loss of Function
- ▶ Adoption
- ▶ Religious Conversion (to or away from a religion)



What Does Disenfranchised Grief Look Like?



Job 32


SO THESE MEN CEASED TO ANSWER JOB, BECAUSE HE WAS RIGHTEOUS IN HIS OWN EYES. THEN ELIHU BECAME ANGRY. HE WAS ANGRY AT JOB BECAUSE HE JUSTIFIED HIMSELF RATHER THAN GOD. HE WAS ANGRY AT JOB'S THREE FRIENDS BECAUSE THEY HAD FOUND NO ANSWER AND HAD DECLARED JOB TO BE IN THE WRONG.

Dealing with Disenfranchised Grief

- ▶ Do not judge the loss — be accepting
- ▶ Acknowledge the loss as important
- ▶ Listen so as to be aware of the depth of the loss
- ▶ Acknowledge the grief of the person who experienced the loss
- ▶ Help with a ritual or a memorial that honors the loss

A blue-tinted photograph of a man and a woman embracing in a church. The man is in the foreground, seen from behind, with his arms around the woman. The woman is slightly behind him, looking down. They are sitting in a church pew. The background is blurred, showing other people in the church. The text "Complicated Grief" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Complicated Grief



Grief that impacts an individual beyond 12 months to the point where they are continually thinking about the loss and are experiencing stress and impairment in major areas of functioning.

Complicated grief can be an understandable response to an extraordinary or abnormal situation.

Complicated grief will require care from a mental health professional in addition to the Pastoral Care Specialist.



Types of Losses That Can Result in Complicated Grief

Traumatic Loss: sudden and/or violent

Ambiguous Loss: Lacking closure

Traumatic Loss:

Any sudden, unexpected loss. Consider the following factors:

- ▶ Violent
- ▶ Multiple
- ▶ Unspeakable
- ▶ Loss of a Parent, Child or Sibling
- ▶ Loss of Someone for Whom the Griever was a Direct Caregiver
- ▶ Loss of Someone in a Position of Power

Ambiguous Loss:

Loss without closure, such as:

- ▶ Missing person where survivors do not know if the person is alive or dead (plane crash and the body is not recovered, soldier killed in action and the body is not recovered)
- ▶ The person is alive but the griever may never see them again (loss of a child to the foster care system)
- ▶ The person is physically present but psychologically gone (loss of significant other to Dementia, traumatic brain injury or mental illness)

Signs of Complicated Grieving

- ▶ Intrusive and persistent thoughts about the loss that create disruptions to daily activities
- ▶ Avoiding or feeling consumed by reminders/memories of who or what was lost
- ▶ Unable to shift out of the early stage of denial or shock
- ▶ Intense and unrelenting feelings about the loss including yearning for who or what was lost, anger, despair, anxiety, or numbness
- ▶ Developing a loss of trust in others; isolating from others
- ▶ Isolating from others
- ▶ Suffering physical symptoms similar to that experienced in the deceased's final illness
- ▶ Unable to stop thinking and feeling that life is meaningless and hopeless without who or what was lost.

Populations at Risk for Disenfranchised and Complicated Grief

- ▶ Immigrants
- ▶ LGBTQ youth
- ▶ Abuse survivors
- ▶ Bereaved parents
- ▶ Unpaid bereaved caregivers
- ▶ Young Widows
- ▶ Isolated persons
- ▶ Post suicide attempt
- ▶ Abandoned/adopted
- ▶ Aging
- ▶ People with mental illness or dual diagnosis

A blue-tinted photograph of a person with their back to the camera, embracing another person in a church setting. The person in the foreground has their arms around the shoulders of the person in front of them. The background shows a church interior with pews and a person in the distance.

Spiritual Caregiver as a Resource for Grieving Individuals

Role of the Caregiver

Caregiving

PCS as a Unique Resource for Grieving Individuals

Basic Skills:

1. Be supportive
2. Listen reflectively
3. Acknowledge the reality of the grief
4. Have patience — offer no timetables
5. Help the grieving person develop rituals for bringing closure
6. Be prepared to provide referral options for professional counseling
7. Know your own grief triggers
8. Develop a non-anxious presence — spiritual caregivers do not need to fix grief

Spiritual Caregiving

Unique Resources:

- ▶ Rituals
- ▶ Communal Prayers
- ▶ Individual Prayers
- ▶ Belonging to a Faith Community
- ▶ Metaphors
- ▶ Narrative Tradition

Caregiving

PCS as a Unique Resource within the Faith Community

Individual Caregiving

Maintaining sense of belonging

Hospitality: listening, validating, normalizing

Rituals

Shaping the Community

Naming the issues, overcoming stigma

Pooling resources

Tasks of Grieving and the Role of Spiritual Caregivers

- ▶ **Task 1:** To accept the reality of loss
- ▶ **Task 2:** To work through the pain of the loss
- ▶ **Task 3:** To adjust to a changed environment
- ▶ **Task 4:** To emotionally relocate and move on with life

The Dual Process Model

Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

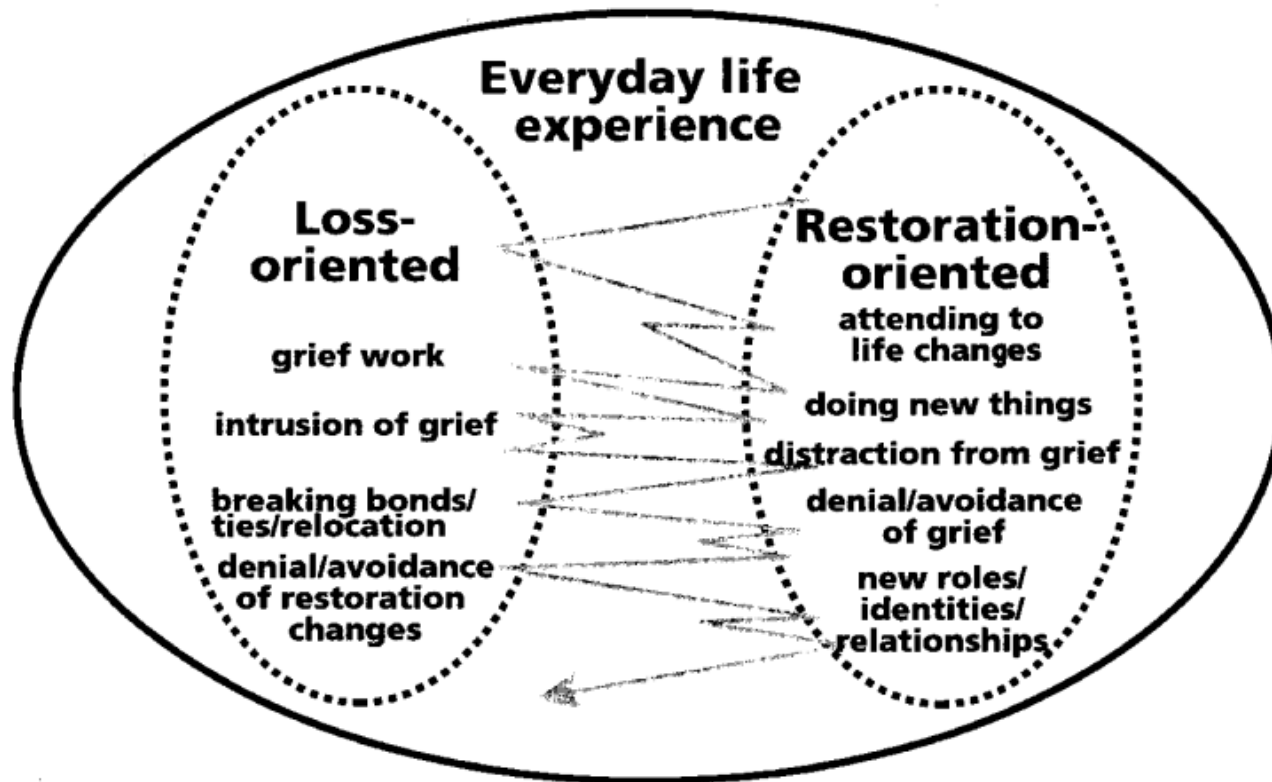


FIGURE 1 A dual process model of coping with bereavement.

Self-Care for the PCS When Caring for Someone with Complicated Grief

- ▶ Sleep, diet, and exercise
- ▶ Spiritual practice
- ▶ Consultation/supervision/group supervision
- ▶ Recognizing the limits of one's scope of expertise
- ▶ Referral

Resilience

The Nature of Resilience

- ▶ Social Competence
- ▶ Problem-Solving Skills
- ▶ Critical Consciousness
- ▶ Autonomy
- ▶ Sense of Purpose

Pastoral Care Role in Prevention

Protective Factors for Young People Notably

- ▶ Caring Relationships
- ▶ High Expectations
- ▶ Opportunities for Participation



When young people's basic human needs for

SUPPORT, RESPECT & BELONGING

are met in faith communities, many youth — even with multiple and severe risks in their lives — can develop into

CONFIDENT, COMPETENT & CARING ADULTS