

Chapter 10

Planning and Support Systems After the Loss of a Loved One

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ABSTRACT

Loss and subsequent grief are hard. Picking up the pieces after a death while trying to plan a funeral and take care of other responsibilities can leave people feeling a myriad of emotions. Making sure family members of all ages are cared for while dealing with their feelings is difficult on a regular day, but it is even more complicated amid a pandemic. The author of this chapter shares their insights and suggestions, having been through this themselves. Different cultures, ethnicities, religions, socioeconomic status, and developmental factors must also be addressed. COVID-19 affected people in all these areas and placed restrictions on regular practices that may be felt for years. Suggestions for moving on after this scenario are listed to help those affected. Included are suggestions for teachers and counselors to process their feelings and help their students and clients grieve and heal.

INTRODUCTION

Although there is no set timetable for going through all the emotions of grief, they can be long and varied, experienced separately or several at once, and there are both good and bad ways of dealing with each one. Individuals may feel one or multiple combinations of emotions, and they must seek help from either a physician or counselor/psychologist in order to help them deal with and process their grief. Counselors need to help determine if their environment, personality traits, or even

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chemical makeup are contributing to the situation and help implement ways to treat clients in the best way for them individually. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution for grief; not all clients can be treated equally.

RELATIONSHIPS AND GRIEF

When one loses a loved one, there are different feelings and responsibilities, depending on the relationship with the loved one. Sometimes, a spouse, parent, sibling, or child has specific things they must do. These all include the grieving process but also could include planning a funeral, what they need to do from a legal standpoint, or even just what to do with their loved one's belongings. (Russ et al., 2022)

Loss of a Child

When a child dies, it can be world changing, as this is not the order in which things naturally happen. Parents expect that they will die before their children. So many things change immediately, but there is also a sense of losing what could have been. The hopes and dreams the parent had for the child or that the child had hoped for themselves are gone. Parents who lose children are not only depressed but seemingly more prone to illness, maybe even earlier death. They also wrestle with not being able to protect their children, so guilt many times will make grieving even harder or longer. Siblings miss their deceased sibling and often feel guilty that they survived. Parents may also blame each other and cannot keep their marriage intact. “A stable, secure environment in which both parents nurture each other as they go from one stage of mourning to the next, while also helping their surviving children to express and cope with their feelings, seems likely to foster the best outcome” (Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2017, p 134).

Loss of a Parent

Several factors make a difference in how a child grieves for the loss of their parent. Age seems to be what makes the most significant difference, especially if the child is noticeably young (Jackson-Cherry & Erford, 2017). Counselors will need to primarily look at the developmental aspects when they are helping these young clients. Teen girls losing their moms can have a more challenging time, and children of all ages may be especially protective of the remaining parent after the loss. Additional issues can occur if both parents are lost, such as who to live with, where they will live, and financial concerns. Studies that assessed children and

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