


Grief and Loss in Addiction & Recovery

Theories, Grief Reactions, and What Helps

Janice Firm, PhD, MSW

Overview

- Why talk about grief
- Why we experience grief
- Grief Theories
- Grief in Addiction
- Grief in Recovery
- What Helps



4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 2

Grief

TALKING ABOUT GRIEF IS IMPORTANT

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 3


Why talk about Grief?

- Change happens!
- To live is to experience loss
- “Little deaths”
- **“Change is *Inevitable*—Growth is *Optional*.”**
- Walt Disney

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 4

Why talk about Grief?

“Working through our endings allows us to redefine our relationships, to surrender what is dead and to accept what is alive, and to be in the world more fully to face the new situation.”



- Stanley Keleman

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 5

Grief

WHY WE EXPERIENCE GRIEF

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 6

Attachment Theory

- Types of Attachments
 - Secure
 - Avoidant
 - Anxious

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 7

Persons

- Persons have personality and character
- A person has a past
- A person has a cultural background
- A person has roles
- No person exists without others
- A person is a political being
- Persons do things
- Persons have regular behaviors
- Every person has a body
- Everyone has a secret life
- Everyone has a perceived future
- Everyone has a transcendent dimension

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 8

Types of Losses

- Loss of...
 - limb, mobility, function
 - independence
 - health status
 - employment
 - drug of choice
 - relationships
 - political agency
 - self-image/identity
 - integrity
 - role(s)
 - "normal"
 - future plans/expectations
 - control over one's schedule
 - Faith, meaning, purpose
- Death


4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 9

Grief

OUR RESPONSE

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 10

Uniqueness of Loss & Grief Response



- Some broad similarities BUT...
 - Perception is key
 - Individual response
 - Frequency of exposure
 - Social support

4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 11


Grief Responses

- Bio-psycho-social-spiritual persons have
 - Emotional
 - Mental
 - Social
 - Spiritual
 - Physical

...response to loss


4/7/2016 Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW 12

Normal Grief Reactions



- Emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive


- Behavioral
- Spiritual



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 13

Grief vs. Depression

Grief can feel like a roller coaster.



Depression can feel like a dead end.

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 14

Myths & Facts

- The pain of the loss will go away faster if I ignore it.
- It's important to be "be strong" in the face of loss.
- If I don't cry, it means I'm not sorry about the loss.
- Grief lasts about a year.

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 15

Grief THEORIES

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 16

E. Kubler-Ross

The five stages of grief:

1. **Denial/Shock/Disbelief:** *"This can't be happening."*
 - Failure to acknowledge the facts, disbelief in the face of overwhelming evidence.
2. **Anger:** *"Why is this happening? Who is to blame? What should have been done differently..."*
 - It can't be true, someone is lying.
3. **Bargaining:** *"Make this not happen, in return I will ____."*
 - If I do x there will be a postponement of what seems to be inevitable.
4. **Depression:** *"I'm so sad."*
 - The sense of great loss; the reduction of the self-image; the realization of one's own shattered vulnerability and mortality.
5. **Acceptance:** *"I'm able to exist with what happened."*
 - The inevitable will come no matter what is done; it must be faced.

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 17

Stroebe & Schut

Dual Process Model:

- Oscillating between a 'Loss-oriented' state and a 'Restoration-oriented' state
 - **Loss-oriented:** more emotional work of grief
 - **Restoration-oriented:** more task-focused grief work
- 'Adaptive denial and distraction' from the emotional work of grief




FIGURE 1 A dual process model of coping with bereavement.

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 18

Martin & Doka



- Grieving Styles: contrasting patterns of grieving and mourning
- Patterns which are not related solely to gender, but to 'style' of mourning
 - **Intuitive** – emphasizing the experiencing and expression of emotion
 - **Instrumental** – focuses on practical matters and problem solving
- These contrasting styles are poles on a spectrum or continuum
- Related more to socialization and personality types than to gender

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

19

J. William Worden The 4 Tasks of Mourning



1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Experience and work through the pain of grief
3. Adjust to the new "normal"; life without what was lost
4. Emotionally relocate the loss and move forward in life

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

20

1) Accept the Reality

- To come full face with the fact that your loss is real and will not return, i.e. immediate reunion or regaining it is impossible.
- **Obstacles:**
 - Denying the facts of loss.
 - Denying the meaning of the loss, e.g. "It wasn't a good job anyway", or "I don't miss him," or "I'm just as healthy as I ever was."
 - Minimizing the loss. "It's not that big of a deal."

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

21

2) Experience & Work Through the Pain

- It is impossible to lose something or someone you have been deeply attached to without experiencing some level of pain.
- **Obstacles:**
 - Not allowing yourself to feel.
 - Cutting off your feelings and denying that pain is present.
 - Avoiding reminders of the loss – e.g., trying to find a 'geographic cure' by moving to another location, or travelling

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

22

3) The New "Normal"

- Coming to terms with being without (maybe raising children alone, facing future unemployment or handicap, redefinition of self, etc.).
 - A. **External Adjustments**: how the loss affects your everyday functioning in the world
 - B. **Internal Adjustments**: how the loss affects your sense of self
 - C. **Spiritual Adjustments**: how the loss affects your beliefs, values and assumptions about the world
- **Obstacles:**
 - Promoting your own helplessness.
 - Not developing the skills you need to cope or to function in new roles.
 - Withdrawing from the world. Refusing to see yourself or the world differently.

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

23

4) Emotionally Relocate

- To find a place for what was lost that will enable us to remain connected with them/it but in a way that will not keep us from going on with life.
- **Obstacles:**
 - Withdrawal from others and life.
 - Unwillingness to love or be healthily vulnerable.
 - Unwillingness to risk; making a vow to never invest yourself again.
 - Holding on so tight to the past that you're unable to form new relationships or develop new skills.

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

24

"To spare oneself from grief at all cost can be achieved only at the price of total detachment, which excludes the ability to experience happiness."

- Dr. Erich Fromm

Grief

IN ADDICTION & RECOVERY

Grief & Loss in Addiction

- Unresolved grief, loss & trauma often predate use
- Compounded in addiction
- Complicated by use
- Minimized
- Normalized

Grief & Loss in Addiction

- Use AOD to cope
- Lack healthy support
- Medicate / Avoid / Minimize feelings
- Grief not processed
- Losses not *fully* grieved

Loss of Self...



Other Losses in Addiction

- Experiences and events
- Relationships with family/friends
- Parenting time
- Family milestones
- Deaths/communal expressions of grief
- Time
- Opportunities
- Perinatal
- Spiritual

Grieving is Necessary!

“Man, when he does not grieve, hardly exists.”

- Antonio Porchia



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

31

Losses in moving from addiction to recovery...

“What are you leaving behind?”



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

32

Loss of drug (s) ...



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

33

Loss of Rituals, etc...



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

34

In early recovery people begin to realize that they have lost a lot...

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

35

“... If you're an addict on the road to recovery, be prepared to experience emotions in a new way – the good and bad; and be sure to have a plan in place to fight off the cravings while you're in that vulnerable state.”

–Michael Bloch

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

36

Barriers to Grieving

- Lack of safety/ trust
- Unable to feel / identify feelings /unable to verbalize
- Feelings unfreeze - feel overwhelming
- Seemingly unrelated feelings may arise (anger, depression, anxiety)
- Lack of social support

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 37


Barriers to Grieving

- Lack of healthy coping skills
- *Complicated by* guilt/shame/ stigma/ trauma
- Avoidance
 - Inability or unwillingness to grieve can be a barrier to recovery/getting well/ building relationships

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 38

Recovery is a Process

- Grief work, like addiction recovery, is not a linear process
- In recovery people acknowledge, understand, and accept losses and move through grief




4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 39

Some Tasks in Recovery

- Develop skills to cope with feelings
- Open up, identify and talk about losses
- Learn to identify feelings and verbalize feelings
- Learn to tolerate “negative” feelings
- Receive necessary social support
- Develop new attachments

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 40


Develop New Rituals



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 41

Recovery Offers:

Opportunity to grieve lost relationships, heal old ones, build new ones and make meaning of past by helping others



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 42

Recovery Offers:
 Opportunity to connect / reconnect with one's spiritual self and to grow spiritually



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 43

Grief
FAMILY & LOVED ONES

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 44

“The **reaction to loss** that is widely experienced by friends and family members of persons who are addicted to mind altering substances **is profound grief**. It has characteristics of flawed interactional patterns because the **loss is ambiguous**.
 If a person dies, the grief is unambiguous: the social role the deceased played is no longer occupied and the deceased cannot fulfill obligations or promises. The spouse who becomes addicted to mind altering substances often **ceases to fulfill obligations or promises, but physically the social role is still occupied.**”
 -Vicki Loyer-Carlson, Ph.D., LMFT

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 45

Losses May Include

- Relationships
- Financial security
- Hopes and dreams
- Self-esteem
- Social standing
- Emotional support, “presence”
- Other important tangible and intangible things

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 46

Complicated Losses

- Painful experiences/memories
- Complex feelings (resentment, anger)
- Stigma, secrecy, shame
- Loss of contact by choice
- Incarceration
- Death

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 47

Tensions for Families

Despair	←————→	Hope
Denial	←————→	Acceptance
Meaninglessness	←————→	Meaningfulness
Independence	←————→	Accepting Interdependence
Ambiguity	←————→	Certainty of Outcome
Making Plans	←————→	Experiencing Emotions
Holding On	←————→	Letting Go
Not Talking	←————→	Speaking Openly
Family as it Was	←————→	Family as it is Becoming

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 48

- Grief feels lonely for family and friends and circumstances may be especially challenging
- Help, support and understanding are available, and healing is possible



- It can be hard work – but it is worth the effort!

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

49

Grief

WHAT HELPS

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

50

“The best therapy for grief is time and community.”

-Michael S. Logan

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

51

Getting Support When You Are Grieving

- Do not grieve alone
- Experience your feelings
- Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way
- Look after your physical health



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

52

Social support Help from community ...



4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

53

Community: AA, NA, etc...

- A safe place to be open about feelings and experiences without shame
- Step work helps people:
 - express grief
 - gain perspective and acceptance
 - forgive and move forward with their lives
- Provides opportunities to give back to others and make meaning

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

54

Support from family/friends/others ...



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 55

Support

- Let family/friends/coworkers/others know what you need
- Support can dissipate over time - continue to ask for and seek out support
- If family/friends are unavailable or unsupportive (including well-intentioned but misguided efforts to be supportive) seek support elsewhere
- Consider professional support

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 56


Spiritual support



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 57

Rituals


Grief rituals and ceremonies acknowledge the pain of loss while offering social support and a reaffirmation of life ...



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 58

Tributes

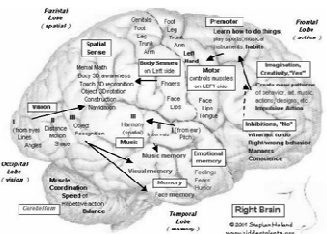
- Creating a tribute, legacy or memorial to honor and remember a loved one can provide comfort
- People often find comfort in donating to a related cause and/or becoming involved in volunteer or service work, or other ways of helping others



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 59

Experiential Techniques

experiential therapies (art, writing, music) engage areas of the brain involved in grief, memory, healing, recovery



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 60

Self-care



4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

61

Know Your Grief Triggers



4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

62

Triggering Events

- Anniversaries
- National tragedies
- Others having a similar experience
- Holidays
- _____
- _____
- _____

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

63

Take Action

- Identify sources of support
- Talk about it
- Plan ahead (more meetings, more social contact, more service work, more spiritual practice etc...)
- Identify healthy, helpful alternatives

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

64

“Grief heals when it is received by a caring other.”

- Wendy Lustbader

4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

65

When is Grief Healed?

- When a person can think of what was lost without acute pain?
- When the tasks of mourning have been accomplished?
- When one can think of the what was lost without physical manifestations such as crying or feeling tightness in the chest?
- When one can reinvest his/her emotions into life and the living?
- When one can regain an interest in life, feel more hopeful, experience healthy gratification again, and adapt to new roles?
- Is there a time limit? 1 year? 4 seasons? 2 years?


4/7/2016

Janice Firm, PhD, LMSW

66

When Grief Isn't Healing


- Relational Factors
- Circumstantial Factors
- Historical Factors
- Personality Factors
- Social Factors



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 67

When Grief Isn't Healing


- Chronic grief
- Delayed grief reactions
- Avoiding grieving



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 68

Grief **WORK**

- Grief therapy: goal is not about forgetting but remembering with less pain.
- Developing adaptive coping mechanisms.
- Finding meaning.
- **AA and Al-Anon, NA and Nar-Anon = grief work**



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 69


Grief

GIVING SUPPORT

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 70

Helping Someone who is Grieving

- Listen
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of grief
- Offer practical help
- Make contact, write a personal note
- Be aware of holidays and anniversaries



4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 71

Taking Hold

“Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain.
It is a sorting process.
One by one you let go of things that are gone and you mourn for them.
One by one you take hold
of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again.”

- Rachael Naomi Remen

4/7/2016 Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW 72

Resources

- J. William Worden, *Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy*, 2008.
- Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses*, 2002.
- Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, (1967), Vol. 11, pp. 213-218.
- Lynn, J. and Harrold, J. (1999). *Handbook for Mortals: Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness*.
- Al-Anon Dist. 5, <http://www.hvcn.org/info/afg5/griefloss.htm>
- HelpGuide.org, http://71.6.131.182/mental/grief_loss.htm
- Dennis C. Daley & G. Alan Mariatt, *Overcoming your Alcohol or Drug Problem*, 2006.
- Wolfet, A. (2009). *The Handbook for Companioning the Mourner*. Companion Press: Colorado.
- Abbot, A., *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs*. NASW, 2010.
- <http://www.hospicenet.org>
- Maciejewski, Zhang, Block, Prigerson, (2010) "An Empirical Examination of the Stage Theory of Grief", *JAMA*
- Stroebe, M., & Schut, H., (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: rationale and description. *Death Studies*, 197-224.
- Doka, K., & Martin, T. (1999). *Men Don't Cry, Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief*.
- Brown, B. (2013). *Daring Greatly*. Penguin Group.
- Stroebe, M. et al. (2013). Partner-Oriented Self-Regulation Among Bereaved Parents: The Costs of Holding in Grief for the Partner's Sake. *Psychological Science*. 24:395-402.

4/7/2016

Janice Fim, PhD, LMSW

73

Barb Smith

Author of "Brent's World"

