Module 7
Loss, Grief, & Bereavement

Course Materials & Disclosure

- Course materials including handout(s) and conflict of interest disclosure statement are available to download with this course.
- This presentation is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide legal, technical or other professional services or advice.

Objectives

- Define loss, mourning, grief and bereavement.
- Provide three interventions that may be appropriate to facilitate normal grief/bereavement.
- Define personal death awareness and cumulative loss associated with professional caregiving.
- Identify four systems of support the nurse can access to assist in coping with death anxiety and loss.
Overview of Loss, Grief, and Bereavement

• Patient, family and nurse all experience losses
• Each person grieves in his/her own way
• An interdisciplinary approach is vital

Nurse’s Role

• Assess the grief
• Assist the patient with grief
• Support survivors

A Grief and Bereavement Program is a Core Component of the Palliative Care Program

• Interdisciplinary team
• On-going reassessment
• On-going support staff
• Complicated grief risk(s)
• Intensive support and prompt referrals
• Bereavement services available at least 12 months after death of loved one
• Culturally and linguistically appropriate information
• Respect of developmental, cultural, and spiritual needs

NCP, 2013
The Grief Process

- Both loss and growth can occur—but distress will still be experienced
- Emotional oscillation is normal and expected

Beyond Kübler-Ross: New Perspectives on Death, Dying, and Grief

- Kübler-Ross taught about listening and humanizing care
- Evidence of “individual pathways” vs. “stages.”
- 40 years later, dying is different
  - More chronic illness - prolongation of life via technology

Definitions: Loss, Grief, Mourning

- A loss may be a person, thing, relationship, or situation.
- Grief is an emotional response to loss
- Mourning is the outward, social expression of loss
- Strongly influenced by culture
Bereavement

• The reaction of the survivor to the death of a family member or close friend.
• The adjustment to a life without the deceased.
• Be aware of cultural characteristics.

D'Avanzo, 2008

Types of Grief

• Anticipatory grief: Grief before loss
• Normal (uncomplicated) grief: “Normal” feelings, behaviors, and reactions to loss
• Physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions

Corless, 2010
Complicated Grief

• 4 Types of Complicated Grief
  ➢ Chronic grief
  ➢ Delayed grief
  ➢ Exaggerated grief
  ➢ Masked grief

• Risk Factors

Disenfranchised Grief

• When loss cannot be openly acknowledged or socially sanctioned
• At risk- AIDS partners, ex-spouse, step-parent/child, terminated pregnancy

Grief Assessment

• Begins at time of admission or diagnosis
• Ongoing to detect complicated grief

Corless, 2010
### Section II: Factors Influencing the Grief Process in Families

- Survivor personality
- Coping skills, patterns
- History of substance abuse
- Relationship to deceased
- Spiritual beliefs
- Type of death
- Survivor ethnicity and culture

### Caregiving: The Human Toll

- Caregivers are an extension of the healthcare workforce—they work 24/7
- Most patients have “family” caregivers
  - Multiple and varied duration, different involvement
  - Average involvement: 8.8 hours/day
  - Over 4 years of caring + 14-24 months during treatment
  - Provide at least 70-80% of the physical care at home

  *van Houtven et al., 2010; van Ryn et al., 2011*

### Loss/Grief/Bereavement: Financial Toll on Family Caregivers

- Loss of income
- Out-of-pocket costs
- Estimated loss of pay from pension ($67,202), Social Security ($25,494) & wages ($566,433)
- “Free” services provided by family caregivers = $306 Billion/year

  *Family Caregivers Alliance, 2011*
What Do Family Caregivers Want When They Are Grieving?

- Loved one’s wishes honored
- Included in decision-making
- Practical help
- Honesty
- To be listened to
- To be remembered
- Know they did all they could possibly do

Northouse & McCorkle, 2010

Children’s Grief

- Based on developmental stages
- Can be normal or complicated
- Symptoms unique to children

Grief Interventions for Survivors: Listen to Their Story

- Provide presence
- Active listening, touch, silence, reassurance
- Identify support systems
- Use bereavement specialists & resources
- Normalize & individualize the grief process
- Actualize the loss & facilitate living without deceased
Bereavement Interventions for Children, Parents, and Grandparents

- Recognize developmental stage of child
- Refer to support groups

Grief Support Should Be Provided in a Variety of Ways

- On-line support
- Bibliotherapy
- Individual counseling
- Group support
- Community support
- Rituals

Completion of the Grieving Process: Is It Possible?

- Grief work is never completely finished
- Healing occurs when the pain is less
Case Study

• Susan, age 54, is a caregiver to her partner Tom, age 72
• They have lived together for 6 years
• Tom was diagnosed with ALS 2 years ago
• His disease is progressing rapidly and he has just returned home after 4 weeks in the ICU
• He is now on a ventilator
• Susan is exhausted, she can’t sleep or eat
• They have little community/family support

Nurses witness:
• Medical futility
  – Prolongation of suffering
  – Denial of palliative care services

Nurses experience:
• Moral distress

Ferrell, 2006

Cumulative Loss
Occupational Stress in Hospice and Palliative Nursing

- Workload
- Control
- Reward
- Community
- Fairness
- Values

Vachon, 2011

Stages of Adaptation

- Nurses new to working with the dying need to emotionally & spiritually adapt
- Stages of adaptation
  - Intellectualization
  - Emotional survival
  - Depression
  - Emotional arrival
  - Deep compassion
  - The "doer"

Harper, 1994

Factors Influencing the Nurse’s Adaptation

- Professional education
- Personal death history
- Life changes
- Support systems

Vachon & Huggard, 2010
Systems of Support

- Finding meaning in your work
- Balance
- Assessing support systems
- Spiritual support
- Education in end-of-life care
- Self care strategies

Vachon & Huggard, 2010

Promoting Excellent Self-Care

Malloy et al., 2013

Conclusion

- Nursing care does not end with the death of a patient
- Nurses must recognize and respond to their own grief
- Provide interdisciplinary care