

WORKING WITH GRIEF*

▶ ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

- 🕒 **Time:** 60 minutes
- ➔ **Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
 - Understand how to differentiate between grief and depression.
 - Determine whether a client is grieving or depressed.
 - Discuss ways to help support a client who is grieving.
- ★ **Training Methods:** Brainstorm, Small Group Case Study, Large Group Discussion
- ✓ **In This Activity You Will...**
 - Facilitate a brief discussion about grief and stages of grieving (20 minutes).
 - Break the group into small groups to discuss two scenarios (25 minutes).
 - Lead a full group debrief of the two scenarios (15 minutes).
- ✂ **Materials:**
 - Flipchart
 - Markers
 - Tape
 - Handout - Working with Grief (optional)
 - Handout - Grief vs. Depression
 - Handout - Working with Grief, Case Scenarios

(continued next page)

Instructions

1. Provide the following information in your own words: By the time most people are adults they have experienced grief in relation to a life event. Grief happens when we have suffered a loss that is somehow permanent.
2. By loss we mean not only death, but other losses such as the loss of one's health status (e.g. an HIV diagnosis), freedom, a love we broke up with, a friend who moved away, a pet, a child who got married and moved away, a place in our life we had to leave behind.
3. We also want to give you all some tools to evaluate whether or not you should refer someone to a mental health professional.
4. Ask:
 - What are things people grieve over?
 - How would you describe grief?
5. Point out that sometimes a person may have difficulty with the process of grieving. Ask: why might this occur?
 - Sometimes we hold beliefs about grief that actually inhibit our ability to grieve.
 - Or we think we have to take care of others by not showing our feelings.
6. Tell the group: There are several models used in the mental health field to describe the process of moving through grief. As peer advocates we help people move through the various stages of initial crisis to the later stages of understanding – growth and positive change. Let's consider the path our clients (and we) walk through the feelings of grief.

* This module comes from the Lotus Women's Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008.

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ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Preparation:

- Write on flipchart:
- 1. Do you hope that you will be able to heal from the loss?
- 2. Do you feel a sense of purpose even though you have suffered a loss?

7. Ask: What are some of the phases or stages someone passes through as they experience grief? List on flipchart. Answers might include:

- Shock/Denial/Unreality
- Fear
- Bargaining
- Loneliness
- Anger
- Shame
- Sadness
- Acceptance
- Sense of meaning/purpose
- Wholeness

8. Ask: What happens as we grieve over time? For most people they will move into the stage of:

- Acceptance
- Sense of meaning/purpose
- Wholeness

9. Sometimes for some it is much more difficult to work through the grieving process – or a person may be or may become depressed. Prolonged depression or anxiety can prevent us from grieving.

10. It is important to know the difference between a client who is grieving or experiencing acute (short-term depression) and a client who is experiencing chronic (long-term depression).

11. Discuss the following points and write on flipchart:

- Someone who is grieving will experience a range of emotions at any given time. Someone who is depressed may not experience a range of emotions; rather she may feel only deep sadness, despair or numbness.
- Someone who is grieving will probably indicate that they know that life will go on despite the loss. People who are depressed often feel a sense of hopelessness.

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“I hope everyone understands the importance of mental health supervision. I need that support. This is hard work. I wouldn't be here anymore if I didn't have it.”

Sylvia Young
Peer Advocate Program Manager
WORLD

- People who are grieving usually feel a sense of purpose; as a matter of fact, the loss may cause them to strengthen or re-assess what is important. Someone who is depressed may feel a lack of purpose, or unenthusiastic about her life's purpose.
12. Break participants into groups of 4-5 and hand out scenarios. Give half the groups scenario #1 and the other half scenario #2. Ask them to answer the questions on the handout. The first 3 questions will help them to analyze the situation, and the last 4 will help them develop a plan.
 13. Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss their scenario.
 14. In the full group, discuss both scenarios and ask for a few responses to each.
 15. You may distribute the optional Working with Grief handout for people to take with them as a homework assignment.

Summary

Wrap up session by reminding participants that grief and grieving are normal processes and to refer clients to mental health professionals if they suspect someone is depressed. As a peer advocate you should also seek support for your own grief from your supervisor or mental health professional.

* This module is part of the online toolkit Building Blocks to Peer Success. For more information, visit http://www.hdwg.org/peer_center/training_toolkit. This module comes from the Lotus Women's Peer Education Training Manual, Center for Health Training and Women Organized to Respond to Life Threatening Diseases (WORLD), 2008.

WORKING WITH GRIEF

SESSION HANDOUT # 1 of 3

WORKING WITH GRIEF

When do we grieve?

We grieve when we have suffered a loss that is somehow permanent:

- Loss of one's health status (e.g. an HIV diagnosis)
- Freedom
- Break up, divorce
- Friend who moved away
- Death
- Loss of a pet
- Child who got married and moved away
- Place in our life we had to leave behind

Stages of Grief

Early Stages of Grief

- Loneliness
- Anger
- Shame
- Sadness
- Fear
- Bargaining
- Shock
- Denial/Unreality

Later Stages of Grief

- Understanding – growth and positive change
- Acceptance
- Sense of meaning/purpose
- Wholeness

Role of a Peer: As a peer advocate you can help clients move through various stages of initial crisis to the later stages of grief!

Grief vs. Depression

Grief

- Range of emotions
- Life will go on
- Sense of purpose for future
- Need time alone and with others
- Usually temporary
- Many times can work through on their own

Depression

- Only sadness, despair
- Sense of hopelessness
- Feel a lack of purpose
- Only want to be alone
- Can be long-term feeling
- Needs professional support to work through

WORKING WITH GRIEF

SESSION HANDOUT # 2 of 3

GRIEF VS. DEPRESSION

Determining if a client is depressed or sad with grief...

1. Do your feelings change throughout the day or the week? For example, are you sometimes sad, happy and/or angry? What are some of the feelings that you have throughout the week?

Someone who is grieving will experience a range of emotions at any given time.

Someone who is depressed may not experience a range of emotions; rather she may feel only deep sadness, despair or numbness.

A follow up question would be: _____

2. Do you have hope that you will be able to heal from the loss? What can you imagine the future to be like?

Someone who is grieving will probably indicate that they know that life will go on despite the loss. People who are depressed often feel a sense of hopelessness.

If a person's answer is no or not sure or that they imagine it to be hopeless, you may want to ask:

3. Do you feel a sense of purpose even though you have suffered a loss?

People who are grieving usually feel a sense of purpose; as a matter of fact, the loss may cause them to strengthen or re-assess what is important. Someone who is depressed may feel a lack of purpose, or unenthusiastic about her life's purpose.

If the answer is no or not sure, you may want to ask her: _____

4. Do you sometimes feel like being alone, and other times feel like being with other people? How is it to be alone? To be with others?

While grieving, people need time alone as well as support and company from other people. If the person only wants to be alone, or only with others, she may be experiencing depression or anxiety.

If she indicates one or the other only, you may want to ask her: _____

WORKING WITH GRIEF

SESSION HANDOUT # 3 of 3

WORKING WITH GRIEF, CASE SCENARIO 1

You have a client who found out that she has HIV about 2 months ago from her OB/GYN who decided to test her after she had several severe yeast infections and was complaining of feeling tired. Her CD4+T cell count came back at 125, so she started medication. Her partner of 5 years broke up with her when he found out about her status.

She found your agency through a referral from her doctor and has been coming to see you for about a month. She has seemed very sad about her situation and today when you see her and ask her how she is doing, she says fine but as she is checking in with you she begins to cry.

For each scenario answer the Following Questions:

1. In your opinion – what is happening in the scenario? _____

2. What state of grief process do you think she is experiencing? _____

3. List the information that supports your conclusion. _____

4. List at least three questions might you ask her to figure out if she is depressed or grieving? _____

5. What thoughts, concerns, or feelings might come up for her? For you? _____

6. What support and/or information could you offer her? _____

7. What action steps might your client, you or both of you consider taking? _____

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SESSION HANDOUT # 3 of 3 (cont.)

WORKING WITH GRIEF, CASE SCENARIO 2

You have a client who has known about her HIV status for several years. She has been taking medication, but after getting the flu, she ended up in the emergency room with pneumonia. When she was in the ER getting her lungs checked, the doctor found a lump on her neck and under her arm. The biopsies determined that she has cancer and she has started treatment for that. When you call to check-in on how she is doing, she sounds angry that her regular doctor did not find the lumps and can't seem to talk about anything else.

For each scenario answer the Following Questions:

1. In your opinion – what is happening in the scenario? _____

2. What state of grief process do you think she is experiencing? _____

3. List the information that supports your conclusion. _____

4. List at least three questions might you ask her to figure out if she is depressed or grieving? _____

5. What thoughts, concerns, or feelings might come up for her? For you? _____

6. What support and/or information could you offer her? _____

7. What action steps might your client, you or both of you consider taking? _____
