

GRIEF AND LOSS, DEATH AND DYING AND SUPPORT OF FRONTLINE STAFF

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Disclaimer

Please consider your discomfort level in attending this presentation. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to leave the training.

When discussing grief and loss, we can experience our own feelings of grief. We encourage you to seek out support as needed.



Introduction

- Plymouth Housing is a Housing First organization
- The mission is to provide permanent housing
- Staff hold hope and optimism
- Healing happens in relationships
- The mission carries the message that life will get better



WHAT

- By default, staff provide elements of **PALLIATIVE CARE**
 - Comfort
 - Acknowledgement of suffering
 - Reduction of suffering
 - Enhancing quality of life




ENLARGING THE SCOPE OF SUPPORT


- 2014: 31 deaths among PHG clients
- 1st quarter 2015: 11 deaths
- High risk population
- Some deaths are anticipated
- Some are unexpected



End of Life Stage

- Little experience
- Placed in medical settings
- Death is more remote
- Less familiar with the Manifestations of Grief
- Compounded Grief

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- In general, we live in a death denying culture and the belief can be that grief is something personal that you leave at the doorstep when you step into work.

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- If one has no, or little experience with death, it's unrealistic to expect that you'll feel comfortable and competent around a dying person or have confidence when addressing the loss to other tenants/clients.



“I didn’t sign up for this!”

- Fill the void of family and friends
- Bridge between tenant and providers
- Encourage adherence to treatments
- Be present with the client
- Support the Community



So What?? What is the Impact?

- The staff is asking for the same things asked for when providing Palliative Care:
 - Comfort
 - Acknowledgement of the suffering
 - Reduction of the suffering
 - Enhancing the Quality of Life in the workplace



Staff Response to Death

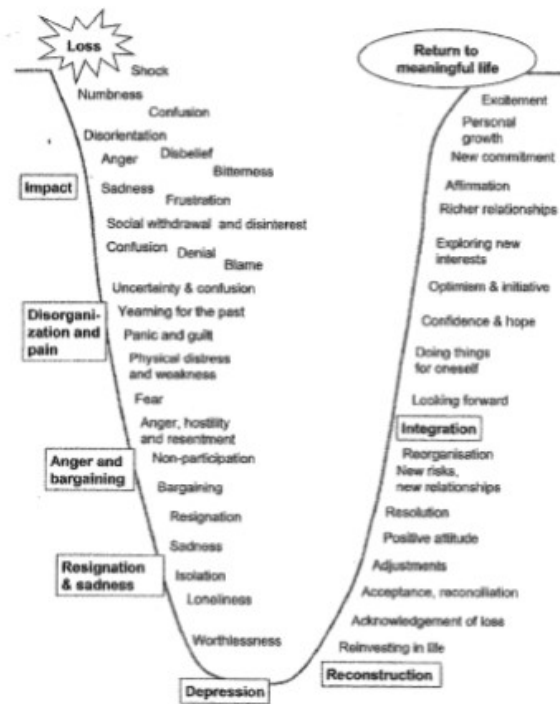
- We failed
- This shouldn't have happened
- Focus on what we didn't do rather than what we DID do.
- What did I miss?
- I should be able to handle this
- I don't know what to do



Understanding the Nature of Grief

- Grief is a reaction to loss; we need to experience the emotion
- Grief is an intense period of disorganization
- Grief is not linear
- Grief sucks, but avoiding it robs us of freedom
- Grief is healed by mourning


Curve of Bereavement & Loss





Stages of Grief

- Stage 1- Shock and Denial
 - Stage 2 -Pain and Guilt
 - Stage 3- Anger and Bargaining
 - Stage 4- Depression , Reflection, Loneliness
 - Stage 5 -The Upward Turn
 - Stage 6 -Reconstruction and Working Through
 - Stage 7- Acceptance and Hope
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- [http//www.recover –from-grief.com/7stages-of-grief.html](http://www.recover-from-grief.com/7stages-of-grief.html)



“For years I bought into the palace lie that grief is something to get over quickly and privately as possible. The depth of feeling continued to surprise me and threaten me, but each time it hit again, I bore it like a nicotine craving. I would discover that it hadn’t washed me away.”

Ann Lamott



NOW WHAT?

- Working model for improving support
- A reflection of agency culture
- Develops from within the staff
- Intentional



Creating Awareness

- Intentional Conversation
 - Job interviews
 - Increase familiarity and feeling of safety around death, dying, grief and loss
 - Dealing with the tenant deaths is included in our model of tenant support
 - Supporting staff as they experience death is a vital part of our work in sustaining the mission



CREATING CONVERSATION

- Identify Formal and Informal support
 - small groups
 - trusted co-workers
 - develop self care strategies
 - EAP



Nurture Resilience

- It's about personal awareness
- Reduced feelings of isolation in the work place
- Feeling safe in the workplace
- Encouraging non-judgmental response within and without



Tips for Resiliency

- Get connected – build strong relationships
- Learn from your experience
- Remain hopeful and optimistic – self care
- Accept and anticipate change – maintain perspective
- Learn to let go of judgment



Internal Checklist

Questions to ask yourself:

- Enabling
- Boundaries
- Limit setting
- Cultural sensitivity
- Ethical dilemmas



Debriefing

- One doesn't need to be a therapist
- Team decides what facilitation is needed
- Keep it simple

- (refer to the handout on debriefing)



At the Time of Death

- Manager/supervisor/leadership – be present
- Acknowledge and witness staff experience
- No need to take control, but be available
- Validate staff experience



After the Death

- Memorials
- Normalize
- What is a good death?
- Our perspective and the tenant's may be different
- What has been your experience?
- How are you managing?
- Cultural perspectives are discovered within the staff



In Closing

Grief never ends,
But it changes,
It's a passage,
Not a place to stay,
The sense of loss must give way as we are to value the life that was
lived.
Grief is not a sign of weakness,
It is the price of caring.

Anonymous