Grief and Bereavement: The Role of the Nursing Assistant
Jocelyn D'Antonio PhD, RN, CHPN®, CT

Disclosures
Jocelyn D'Antonio has no real or perceived conflicts of interest that relate to this presentation.

Objectives
1. Describe manifestations of grief in clients and family members.
2. List appropriate responses of the nursing assistant to grieving patients and family members.
3. Describe and recognize manifestations of hospice staff grief.
4. List appropriate coping mechanisms for hospice staff grief.
Grief, Mourning, and Bereavement

Are they the same thing?

Grief, Mourning, and Bereavement

Are experienced by patients, families, and healthcare workers.

Everyone grieves in his or her own way.

Is grief “normal”?
What are some different types of grief?

Healthy grief
Complicated grief
Anticipatory grief

What does healthy grief look like?

In a person’s body
In a person’s emotions
In a person’s mind
In a person’s behaviors

What does complicated grief look like?

There are different types of losses that make a person more likely to experience complicated grief.
What about anticipatory grief?

Grieving:
- Can begin before the person dies
- Is individual
- Never ends, but changes over time
- Involves stages and tasks
- Can cause growth and transformation
- Closure vs. continuing bonds

What can you do to help grieving people?

LISTEN!!!
Let them tell you their story.
But do not be afraid to just sit quietly with someone.
Be sensitive to the disenfranchised griever.
What can you do to help grieving people?

Let them know that is OK to grieve.

Provide privacy.

Support and encourage the patient’s spirituality.

What can you do to help grieving people?

Support cultural practices and rituals.

Encourage social support.

*Report observations to your interdisciplinary team.*

What about children? Do they grieve?
What about YOU? Do healthcare workers grieve their patients also?

Some things you can do:

- Exercise
- Good nutrition
- Spirituality
- Support systems
- Talk to your supervisor or manager

*Do not be ashamed that you feel the way you do!*

Some concluding thoughts:

Grief never really ends, but becomes more manageable with time.

The goal of grieving is to develop continuing bonds with the deceased, not closure.
Grief transforms and promotes growth

References
City of Hope and American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Loss, Grief, and Bereavement. ELNEC SuperCore Curriculum. 2007.
