

Bereavement Ministry

Presented by Dr. Rich Denning



**“Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted”
(Matthew 5:4 NKJV)**



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PASTOR ♦ TEACHER ♦ LEADERSHIP COACH



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I. Definitions

A. Bereavement – being deprived of something/someone (bereft) and in mourning.



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I. Definitions (continued)

B. Grief – the subjective feelings that are brought about by a significant loss.



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I. Definitions (continued)

C. Mourning – the process by which grief is resolved; the societal expression of grief.



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II. Dynamics of Grief

A. Natural – It is okay to grieve. It is okay to shed tears over a loss. Jesus wept at the loss of his friend Lazarus (John 11:35).



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II. Dynamics of Grief (continued)

B. Necessary – It's a human response to loss which helps one cope, adjust, and accept the realities of life.



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II. Dynamics of Grief (continued)

C. Multifaceted – It affects every dimension of one's personal life (BASICS: behavioral, affective, somatic, interpersonal, cognitive, and spiritual).

Universal



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II. Dynamics of Grief (continued)

D. Automatic – One does not have a choice to grieve or not to grieve. However, one does have the choice how to grieve.



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II. Dynamics of Grief (continued)

E. Universal – It is common to all ages – including infants and children. However, it is expressed uniquely in each individual because each grieves differently.



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II. Dynamics of Grief (continued)

F. Long Term – It is a lingering process and the wounds often take time and attention to heal properly. Some losses have lifelong effects which are not easily accepted. Learning to cope with the loss is essential for such losses.



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III. Basic Types of Grief

A. Anticipatory Grief – occurs before (anticipates) the loss. It provides the opportunity to intentionally address loss in advance of the actual event (i.e., wills, pre-need arrangements, hospice care, etc.).

Potter & Perry, 2010



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III. Basic Types of Grief (continued)

B. Normal Grief – Consists of normal behaviors, reactions, to loss and symptoms.

Potter & Perry, 2010



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III. Basic Types of Grief (continued)

C. Complicated Grief – when an individual has trouble progressing through the normal (generally accepted) stages or phases of grieving (i.e., absent grief, distorted grief, converted grief, chronic grief).

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III. Basic Types of Grief (continued)

D. Disenfranchised Grief – when a loss is experienced and cannot always be openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publically shared (i.e., AIDS, abortion, ex-spouse, step-child/parent).

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IV. Worden's Four Task of Mourning:

1. To accept the reality of the loss.
2. To work through the pain of the grief.
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.
4. To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life.

J William Worden, *Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 2 ed. (NY: Springer, 1991) 10-18.



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IV. How to Help the Grieving

1. Help identify the loss.
2. Help them change their relationship with that they lost.
3. Help them find new ways to function (may involve a new identity).
4. Help them replace the emotional investment.

H. Norman Wright, "Exploding the Myths – Loss, Part II," in Crisis Care: Hope for the Hurting Video Series (Grace Products Corp., 1996).



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V. Appropriate Grief Resolution Time-Frames:

1. Natural/Normal Death – 2 years
2. Accidental Death – 3 years
3. Suicide – 4 years
4. Homicide – 5 year
5. Death of a Child – 7/8 years (or no closure)

H. Norman Wright, “Exploding the Myths – Loss, Part II,” in Crisis Care: Hope for the Hurting Video Series (Grace Products Corp., 1996).



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VI. Experiencing Death: A Developmental Perspective*

- A. Ages 2-7 characterized by magical thinking and egocentricity. Death seen as temporary and reversible.

*Nancy Boyd Webb, ed., *Helping Bereaved Children: A Handbook for Practitioners* (NY: Guilford, 1993).



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VI. Experiencing Death: A Developmental Perspective (continued)

- B. Ages 7-11 Sees death as irreversible but that it won't happen to them, just to the old and sick (who can't run fast enough).



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VI. Experiencing Death: A Developmental Perspective (continued)

- C. Ages 9-12 understands death as permanent and irreversible; more aware that they could die too.



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VI. Experiencing Death: A Developmental Perspective (continued)

- D. The knowledge that death is irreversible and inevitable does not occur until about age 9 or 10.



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VII. Children's Concerns

A. In times of grief, especially at the death of a loved one, the child's greatest concern is:

“Who will take care of me?”



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VII. Children's Concerns (continued)

B. Most children can handle any loss if provided with the following:

- Safety
- Security
- Simple, Honest Answers



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve:*

- A. It is vital to understand the cognitive functioning of children and its role in their ability to grieve and to cope with loss.

*James A. Fogarty. "The Grieving Child: Comprehensive Treatment & Intervention Strategies. (Tucson: AZ Carondelet Health Care, 1998 + The American Academy of Bereavement.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- B. Children ages 0-2 have no defenses (little vocabulary, no abstract thinking ability, limited social network, etc.).



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- C. Children ages 0-2 tend to absorb the emotions of those around them. Beliefs about self become deeply embedded at this age.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- D. Children ages 2-7 are still greatly influenced by parental emotional state but are developing their own separate emotional state. Imagination and memory become available coping mechanisms.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

E. Age 8: Abstract reasoning develops.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- F. Ages 9-12: Becoming more adult in thoughts, but childlike beliefs continue. Repression of emotions now more probable. Increased dependency upon language to express feelings, yet still uses play as a means of dealing with emotions/thoughts.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- G. Early Adolescence: tends to focus on the biological and physical aspects of death (bodily change/growth vs. death contrast). Both fearful and fascinated with death. A time of theorizing about death. Increased concern over spiritual matters.



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VIII. Helping Children to Grieve: (continued)

- H. Teens: often need permission to grieve. Need healthy models of grieving. Anger (passive or aggressive) may be grief related.



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IX. Helping Families to Grieve:

- A. Help in communicating feelings and perceptions among family members may be needed.



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IX. Helping Families to Grieve: (continued)

B. Caregiver may invite family
to address the following together:*

- 1) The story of the wound (Illness)
- 2) Worries and fears
- 3) Roots (Historical; ancestral goodbyes)
- 4) The Family Speaks (“Tell me about...”)
- 5) Blessings

*“When All Is Said and Done: An Introduction to the Family Meeting”
– Erskine Theological Seminary, McCain Library video BF 789 D4 W47 1994)



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X. Pastoral Responses to the Grieving:

1. Be present (practice incarnational theology)
2. Avoid empty platitudes and theological anemic clichés
3. Mourn with those who mourn. (Rom. 12:15b)



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X. Pastoral Responses to the Grieving: (continued)

4. Listen, Listen, Listen...
5. Offer hope, but not false promises
6. Follow-up and invite stories
(remembering)
7. Accurate empathy, non-possessive
warmth, inherent genuineness



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XI. Recovery Steps to Loss:*

1. Be sensitive to what the grieving person needs
2. Try to identify what does not make sense about the loss to the grieving person
3. Treat feelings like a guest

*H. Norman Wright, "Exploding the Myths – Loss, Part II," in Crisis Care: Hope for the Hurting Video Series (Grace Products Corp., 1996).



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XI. Recovery Steps to Loss:

4. Explore what steps/actions the grieving one needs to take to overcome the loss
5. Teach how to measure the intensity of their grief (chart it: scale 1-10)
6. Focus on strengths in the persons life



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XI. Recovery Steps to Loss:

7. Inform about the stages of grief (Not Kübler-Ross's stages of dying!!)
8. Assist in saying goodbye
9. Write letters (form of saying goodbye)



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XI. Purpose of a Funeral/Memorial Service:

1. To Worship God
2. To Thank God for the Life
of the Deceased
3. To Be Comforted by God's Word

Andrew Patterson Blackwood, *The Funeral: A Special Book for Ministers* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1942; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972).

