
Preface

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SECTION 1: Theories of Complicated Grief

The first chapter by Tom Attig examines the concepts of grief and extraordinary grief and their impact on the ability of the grieving to relearn their world. This chapter establishes the framework for the text.

SECTION 2: Children and Complicated Grief

The second section of the text focuses upon traumatic death and its impact on grieving individuals and families. As individuals face and attempt to manage grief, each may develop a style that allows him or her to cope. Certainly, there are different styles of grieving and any style may have elements that complicate or facilitate coping with loss. For each of us, however, losses may be a turning point where the individual faces personal and social choices. He or she can move forward, maintain the status quo, sicken and/or die, face the loss cognitively and/or spiritually, be active or passive in his/her response, or simply do nothing. While each of us places meaning on our losses, why is it that some make meaningful choices and others do not? Why is it that making no choice at all may challenge our sense of meaning? Do children need "adult" models to be able to cope? Do we "socialize" people too much, and by doing so make their grieving more complicated?

The next two chapters focus upon children and traumatic death. David Adams presents an analysis of the consequences of sudden traumatic death on children. He makes specific suggestions for ways to address the vulnerability of

bereaved children and adolescents and offers concrete suggestions as to how adults might be able to help. The chapter offers suggestions for professionals and for families and parents to aid children and adolescents. Paul Clements, Jr. investigates the impact of homicide on children and offers suggestions for aiding children to manage their grief in the face of traumatic death.

Toni Griffith examines the responses of rage, regret, and revenge in children. She suggests that it may be helpful to incorporate programs using puppetry, music, song, and expressive arts as ways to aid elementary school children in loss, grief, and transition. Griffith offers ideas as to how to uncover and assist with children who exhibit such grieving patterns. Kerry Cavanagh presents and analyzes three case studies of children that suggests that children experience long-term effects of bereavement that are often ignored. He examines the dynamics of the family and its impact on that system.

SECTION 3: Complicated Grief in Special Populations

Larry Darrah examines the impact of grief on families of soldiers who are listed as "missing in action." This particular grief is further complicated by the fact that there is no verification of the actual death of the soldier whether it be World War I, Korea, Viet Nam, or any other war. At what point does the person who is grieving lose hope and accept that the loved one is dead? When does one consider remarriage? Darrah offers practical suggestions for managing such traumatic grief. Antoon Leenaars then examines the complication of grief when suicides occur among Canadian Inuit groups. While his analysis is applied to an isolated geographical group, he offers practical suggestions that would apply to any suicide survivor.

Jane Powell offers insights that might be useful for all who grieve, as she examines the responses of differently-abled people and grief which is complicated by their disabilities. She suggests that each of us can learn from their patterns of grieving. Powell offers seven specific actions to aid people with disabilities to manage their grief. Lynne Martins addresses the impact of grief upon those coping with mental illnesses. To be coping with a mental illness and to have the additional burden of coping with the death of a loved one would indeed complicate one's grieving. Martins offers an in-depth analysis of what the problems might be and specific suggestions offering how to aid the mentally ill individual. Catherine Quinn offers a similar analysis of the problems and possible solutions presented with the grieving of demented individuals including Alzheimer's disease. All three of these chapters offer suggestions for dealing with special populations. Clearly, in examining traumatic death and complicated grieving, special needs must be addressed.

Boyd Purcell examines the impact on grief of spiritual abuse. He suggests that those offering spiritual care may, at times, abuse with their attempts at care.

The next chapters in this section address issues that are not often presented in texts designed to aid professionals. Those who work as professionals in dying, death, and bereavement are aware of a variety of models, theories, and/or strategies for assisting people who are bereaved. These professionals face many challenges, problematic connections, and goals that need to be addressed. It is difficult to assess, direct, and assist people in need, with full assurance that the approach being applied is the “correct” one for the individual(s) being assisted.

Support groups may allow some to normalize their grief, to ventilate their personal issues, to receive support, and to receive suggestions for coping. One wonders why groups work for some and not for others. Most families share emotions, feelings, and grief, but why do some families not share? Death appears, at times, to be unfair and unjust. Sometimes one cannot make sense out of the death. Yet as humans, we engage in meaning-making.

Richard Gilbert responds to the realities of spiritual abuse by offering suggestions for those providing care on how to aid, rather than hurt, people in their spiritual journey and longing. He also suggests help for tracking our own spiritual issues and stories.

Christine Hodgson, Lynda Weaver, and Pippa Hall provide an assessment tool for those who work in a palliative care setting to better assess families who will potentially experience complicated grief. Susan Parker presents the role of personality as a variable in one’s grief response. Diane Midland’s chapter analyzes the impact of miscarriage that often occurs without interventions that are normally given following a death. All three chapters are empirically based and offer analysis that is grounded on research.

Janis Keyser presents an analysis of death at birth and its impact on the family. She examines research and offers an analysis of journals of grieving mothers.

Hannah Sherebrin discusses the reactions of grief when terrorism occurs. She suggests that, while the grief is ultimately the families’ alone, the support of the community (or nation in the case of well-known figures) can greatly aid one’s grieving. The sense of community that emerges at times like this might offer a lesson for any town, village, or nation that experiences such traumatic loss.

Richard Paul offers an analysis of viewing the body and its impact on grief from the perspective of a professional funeral director. He critically analyzes the arguments for and against viewing the dead body and makes suggestions for reaching a decision. Robert Stevenson provides educators and parents of school children insights for helping students and those who teach them to manage death in schools. He offers positive interventions and the research to support those interventions. In another chapter that examines grief in family

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systems, Stephen Hoogerbrugge examines the impact of family systems on grief. He suggests that the family system can be used as a model to aid those experiencing complicated grief. The final chapter by Gerry Cox suggests that care givers consider the use of art in its various forms, music, and humor to aid dying and bereaved children.