Uncomplicated and Complicated Grief

Mental health and healthcare professionals are faced with the often misunderstood and misdiagnosed symptoms of uncomplicated and complicated grief. Formal education rarely, if ever, provides extensive enough training to accurately identify and treat those who are grieving. Often grieving clients present with other diagnoses because symptoms can mimic uncomplicated or complicated grief. The grieving process is often pathological, or misdiagnosed, resulting in potential exacerbation of the presenting issues because inappropriate interventions are utilized. As a result, those who are grieving are often inadvertently disenfranchised by providers, which can make the professional support they sought to reconstruct their previously shattered identities and worldviews ineffective. It is essential to be versed in identifying grief-related constructs that may underlie, or even cause, mental health difficulties.

This presentation aims to provide current information on the grieving process, clarify misconceptions of outdated theories, and differentiate between uncomplicated and complicated grief, and also examines the changes in conceptualization, differential diagnosing, treatment planning, and interventions used with grieving individuals. Attendees will leave with an improved clinical skill set to immediately identify and treat their clients.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Describe the psychological, physiological, behavioral, spiritual, interpersonal, cognitive, and emotional responses to loss
- Define both “complicated” and “uncomplicated” bereavement
- Define disenfranchised losses and work more effectively with individuals experiencing disenfranchised loss
- Describe why the stage model of the grieving process is no longer utilized to inform treatment planning or develop interventions
- Identify changes to the DSM-V as it relates to uncomplicated and complicated bereavement

Seminar Schedule

Begin 10 AM EST and end 5:00 PM, with 15 minute breaks at 11:30 and 3:30, and a half hour lunch break at 1 PM

Definitions

Uncomplicated grief
Disenfranchised grief

Outline

BREAK
Grief theories
Cultural considerations
Attachment
Complicated grief
LUNCH
DSM-V and differential diagnosing
Assessment
BREAK
Treatment Planning
Interventions

The Presenter

Dr. Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., FT is a licensed clinical psychologist in both Delaware and California, made a Fellow of Thanatology (death, loss, and bereavement) by the Association for Death Education and Counseling, owner of The Center for Grief Therapy and Education, co-owner and director of clinical services at Integrative Psychology Group, professor/faculty member, and professional speaker. She works as an adjunct faculty member at Marian University’s Master’s in Thanatology program, National University, and GaldeyBeacon College, focusing her research, course development, and teaching on Bereavement Studies and Integrative Psychology. She served as the chair for the Continuing Education Committee for the San Diego Psychological Association from 2007-2009 and the Delaware Psychological Association from 2018-2019. Dr. Zampitella specializes in death, loss, and bereavement, integrative psychology, spirituality, and nature-based therapy. She is the former resident psychologist on Fox 5 News in San Diego, and often appeared on NBC News. She has been featured in Elle Magazine, Buzzfeed, and The Huffington Post.

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