



## *Coping with Health Changes*

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## Agenda

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- Intro
- Mental Health Issues
- Loss & Grief
  - Own health
  - Friends
- Stress Management
- Self Care



## Role of Counselor

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- Be present to client's pain
- Provide non-judgmental, safe space
- Listen with empathy
- Normalize experience and emotions
- Support (e.g. find meaning)
- Educate
- Refer to other sources, as needed

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## Mental Health

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- Get a check-up, grief is not a pathology
- Desire not to live
- Better living through chemistry
- How are you functioning?
- Support
- Journal
- Difference between grief and depression...

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## Signs of Depression

Per Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), 5 of the following 9 for two weeks:

- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Depressed mood
- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite disturbances
- Low energy / fatigue
- Psychomotor agitation
- Poor concentration and cognition
- Excessive feelings of worthlessness or guilt, hopelessness and helplessness
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide attempt

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## Depression or Grief?

- Many similarities
  - Sadness, pain, loss of interest, fatigue, poor concentration, sleep & appetite disturbances
- Depression: feelings of worthlessness (e.g. Everyone would be better without me.)
- Grief: thoughts of how difficult life is (e.g. Why did this happen to me when I try to be a good person? How can I live without my body as I've always known it?)

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## When to Seek Help

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- If you think you need help
- Depressed
- Desire to harm self or others
- History of poor coping
- Poor functioning, overwhelmed
- Lots of people who know you well say it would be beneficial

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## Theories of Grieving

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### Tasks: Worden

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

Worden, J.W. (2002) *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy (3rd ed)*, New York: Spring Publishing Co, pp 27-37.

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## Anticipatory Grief

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- The patient or family may
  - Pull away or
  - Embrace
- Feelings of helplessness to change outcome
- It's not over until it is over
  - May or may not aid in post-surgery experience
- Caretakers may neglect themselves

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## Disenfranchised Grief

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- Losses that are not acknowledged
- The family loses nothing, you may lose your perception of self image, independence and / or control

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## Managing Stress

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- Be gentle with yourself: make minimum commitment, don't overdo
- Monitor depression & anxiety
- Control what you can, surrender to the rest
- Maintain healthy lifestyle
  - Sleep, eat appropriately, exercise
  - Drink in moderation
  - Relax (deep breathing, meditation / prayer)
  - Do things you enjoy
- Socializing
  - Remember: Alcohol is depressant

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## Managing Stress (cont'd)

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- Seek / allow support - inform others of your needs, allow others to help
- Journal
- Quietude
- Allow yourself to feel what you feel, express pain, don't fight it

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## Gifts to Give Yourself

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- Time
  - Time to rest,
  - Time to take care of yourself
  - Time to adjust to change
- Patience
- Allow yourself to feel good, to feel the pain
- Hope

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## Self Care

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### Spiritual

- What gives you peace
- What makes you feel whole
  
- Get a check-up
- Spiritual crisis
- Grief can be catalyst & teacher

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## Self-Care

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### Avoid

- Hasty, impulsive, or large changes
- Self-medicating
- Compulsive behavior - drugs, alcohol, sex, internet porn, gaming, shopping, exercise, cleaning, etc.
- Wasting energy complaining
- Putting yourself last

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## Things Not To Say

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- I know just how you feel. Blah, blah blah happened to me
- It's been x weeks/months, you just need to get over this.
- Don't cry. Be strong / brave.
- It's better this way.
- We have no right to question God's will.
- Why didn't you talk to me about it / your decision?
- It was really a blessing. You must be relieved.
- You are so strong.
- Time will heal.
- Count your blessings.
- You're so lucky that ....

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