Healing the Trauma of Loss

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Removal, death, missing, destroyed, unknown, changed

**WHAT IS LOSS?**
Tragedy, pain, fear, numb,

WHAT IS TRAUMA?
Anticipated Loss

- Birth Defect
- Chronic Illness
- Terminal Illness
- Old Age
Conventional Grief

- Direct relationship to the event with an emotional response based on one’s own experience with the decease.
Trauma

- Domestic Violence
- Abuse
- Assault
- Military Loss
- Incarceration
- Sudden Death
Violent Death

The violent death may be due to:

- suicide,
- drug overdose,
- death by vehicular homicide,
- drunk drivers,
- Bombing,
- Terror Attacks,
- Gang War,
- Home Invasion,
- Kidnapping,
- Hate Crime,
- Riots
- War
- and murder.
Violent Death

• "Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives- the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it and change it as times change - truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts."

• Salman

• Rushdiewww.griefspeaks.com retrieved 5-8-16
Feelings

• People talk of feeling:
  • battered,
  • shaken
  • and almost destroyed.
Emotional reactions

• Feelings of anger,
• rage,
• sorrow,
• fear,
• panic,
• pain
• and yearning may take over
5 RESPONSES TO TRAUMATIC LOSS

• Many professionals agree that there may be 5 responses that often accompany traumatic loss:
  • Shock
  • Disbelief or Denial
  • Anger
  • Guilt
  • Acknowledgement or acceptance (I know that some have shared with me that they will never accept that this terrible thing happened but they will acknowledge it). Words are very powerful at this time especially.

Symptoms of Trauma, Traumatic Stress:

- Physical: fatigue, exhaustion, sleep disturbances, hyper-arousal, appetite changes, digestive issues, headaches, nausea, muscles aches
- Emotional: fear and guilt, numbness, anxiety, depression, anger, helplessness, irritability, frustration
- Behavioral: withdrawal, outbursts, hyper alert, change in activity, suspiciousness, startle reaction increases,
- Cognitive: flashbacks, difficulty with problem solving, change in alertness, amnesia/confusion, decreased concentration, difficulty making decisions, memory disturbances.

www.griefspeaks.com
Grief and Fear

"No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing. At other times it feels like being mildly drunk or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. - C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

Risk Factors for Increased Reactions

This includes individuals who:

• Were very close to the person(s) who died
• Were present when the person died
• Have suffered a recent loss
• Have experienced a traumatic event
• Are isolated or lack a personal support network
• Suffer from depression, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, or other mental illness
Increase reaction

- Well know individual
- Popular individual
- Extensive Media Coverage
- Close to age, sex
- Similar background
Sharing another’s grief

No knowledge of decease but close to someone who knew person or intense reactions to the mourner.

• Experience collective grief – Collective memory, lives into infamy, triggers our own personal grief Losses that went unrecognized or unacknowledged.

• or even vicarious grief- imaginative or sympathetic participation in the experience of another person, emotional participation in the loss

Read more: http://www.deathreference.com/A-Bi/Bereavement-Vicarious.html#ixzz487KN78HJ
Horrific Events

- Oklahoma City Federal Building Bombing
- TWA flight 800 explosion
- 9/11
- Boston Marathon
- Theater Shooting
- Columbine School Massacre
- Sandy Hook
- Chardon School
Famous Individuals

• President John F. Kennedy
• Martin Luther King Sr.
• Robert Kennedy
• Princess Diana
• John F. Kennedy Jr.
• Michael Jackson
• Prince
Life symbolic of one own

• Vulnerability
• Social Contagion
  Catalyze
Professional trauma

“pre trauma state:
• Compassion fatigue
• Burnout

Post Trauma State:
• “vicarious trauma, also known as secondary traumatization, secondary stress disorder, or insidious trauma.””

• [Link](http://www.wendtcenter.org/resources/for-professionals/) Retrieved May 10, 2016
Trauma, PTSD Symptoms

• “Intrusions, such as flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts
• Avoidance of situations, people or places that bring on the intrusions
• Hyperarousal, including hypervigilance, sleeplessness, and increased startle response (“jumpiness”)
• http://www.wendtcenter.org/resources/for-professionals/
Comprehensive look at Symptoms

• Behavioral
• Physical
• Cognitive
• Emotional
• Social
Behavioral symptoms

- “Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Appetite changes
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response, “jumpiness”
- Losing things
- Clumsiness
- Self-harm behaviors
- Negative coping – smoking, drinking, acting out

Physical symptoms

• “Panic symptoms – sweating, rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing, dizziness
• Aches and pains
• Weakened immune system”
Cognitive symptoms

• “Minimization of your vicarious trauma
• Lowered self-esteem and increased self-doubt
• Trouble concentrating
• Confusion/disorientation
• Perfectionism
• Racing thoughts
• Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
• Repetitive images of the trauma
• Lack of meaning in life
• Thoughts of harming yourself or others”

Emotional symptoms

- “Helplessness and powerlessness
- Survivor guilt
- Numbness
- Oversensitivity
- Emotional unpredictability
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Sadness and/or depression”

Social symptoms

• “Withdrawal and isolation
• Loneliness
• Irritability and intolerance
• Distrust
• Projection of blame and rage
• Decreased interest in intimacy
• Distrust
• Change in parenting style (e.g., becoming overprotective)”

Human experience

- Shattering of person security
- Safety
  - https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/recovering-trauma
“8 things to think about immediately following a traumatic loss:

• Start gathering your support system around you. You will want to and need to express strong feelings about what happened and how you feel. It isn't healthy to suppress these urges. Having trusted family and friends around who can listen and share memories will be important now.

• Have a support member start notifying the people who most need to know. It helps to notify those who can easily contact others for you. Some people will need to be notified in person.

• Identify those in your support system who will be responsible for protecting your privacy from the media. You will be approached by reporters. Determine how you will deal with their questions. Decide if you will watch the news coverage or not. You may want to record news for a later time.

• Try to get some rest and think about your own health. Contact a family doctor, grief counselor, and clergy. Get time off from work if possible. You will be easily distracted. Be very careful driving now.

• Do not try to maintain an appearance of false strength. Be honest with others about your feelings. Nobody expects as much from you as you do right now.

• Know that everyone grieves differently.

• You will experience physical and emotional symptoms of grief beyond your control. Be prepared for them.

• Try to eat, get rest and even walk a bit if possible.

• Don't let people take advantage of you now.”

Healing

• Processing painful emotions
• Address feeling directly
• Shut down of stimulation and decrease in energy supplied to nervous system
• Dispel the feelings of distress attached to the event – tell the story, write, draw
• Encourage feelings they lead to healing
• Revisit the site of the trauma (grasp the reality)

• https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/recovering-trauma
- Recovery

- Feel

- Act

- interact
Support System

• Courage be a part
• Experience feelings
• Share pain
• Overcome trauma
• Growth share recovery
• Rebirth -integration
The helper role

• Listen with empathy as they tell their stories
• Assist with process of desensitization
• Learn how the person displays feelings (what is their style of expression) in order to choose the correct approach for addressing the feelings.
• Take Action-help individual gain control. Do what is closest to you that you can make a difference.
• https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/recovering-trauma
REFERENCES


http://www.griefspeaks.com/id107.html Retrieved May 12, 2016,


