SINKING INTO GRIEF:
ISSUES OF BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS
IN THE ADVISING RELATIONSHIP

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Breathe Bubble
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand relationship of grief/loss to academic advising

Comprehend contemporary theories of grief

Develop skills in dealing with grief/loss
LISTEN IN TO WHAT OUR “STUDENTS” ARE SAYING....

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auoP1rd2-Ol
LISTEN IN TO WHAT OUR “STUDENTS” ARE SAYING....

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyp7ZU0_XQQ
NOW, LISTEN IN TO WHAT STUDENTS ARE REALLY SAYING....

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R77PILZA_Ns&t=38s
GRIEF AND LOSS
& ADVISING

• **Half** of undergraduates in a recent study lost a grandparent or friend within the year (Stapley & Morecraft, 2015): pre-Covid statistic!

• Losses due to Covid are immeasurable:
  - Family and friends have died without grief rituals
  - Graduations delayed
  - Remote/hybrid learning
  - Isolation-lack of socialization
  - Food insecurity
  - Financial/job losses
WHAT DOES GRIEF & LOSS HAVE TO DO WITH ADVISING, ANYWAY?

Definition of Developmental Advising Model (Winston et al., 1984): process by which a close advisor-student relationship to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals

(Retrieved from https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Developmental-Academic-Advising.aspx)

NACADA Core Competencies include

• Relational: facilitate meaning-making

NACADA Core Values include

• Inclusivity: supportive culture for diverse populations through acceptance
• Respect: student-centered approach with sensitivity
• Empowerment: support to meet challenges
• Caring: empathetic listening and compassion

CONTEMPORARY GRIEF/LOSS THEORIES

“On Death and Dying”
(Kubler-Ross, 1970)

• Five stages of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance
• **Problem:** research was on dying patients, not grieving persons
• **Problem:** Theory implies an end, and a required & sequential movement through the five stages
Dual Process Model of Grief

(Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

Griever vacillates between
1. **CONFRONTING** the loss
2. **MOVING ON**

CONTEMPORARY GRIEF/LOSS THEORIES

Task-Based Model of Grief
(Worden, 2008)

• To accept the loss
• Experience the pain of grief
• Adjust to new life without the person
• Reinvest in new life

T = To accept the reality of the loss
E = Experience the pain of the loss
A = Adjust to the new environment without the lost person
R = Reinvest in the new reality
CONTEMPORARY GRIEF/LOSS THEORIES

Meaning Making Model of Grief
(Neimeyer, 2001ff)

• Addresses the existential question: WHY?
• Reaffirms and reconstructs a personal narrative challenged by loss
WHAT TO DO WHEN A STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING LOSS OR GRIEF

They are trusting you in this moment, so:

• Enable a psychologically safe space
• Be self-aware
• Follow their agenda
• Ask for what they need and what they are feeling
• Active and reflective listening
• Empathize
• Ask open ended questions: be curious
• Meaning making rituals, i.e. letters to the deceased, journaling, song writing, art, funeral, wake
• Refer out to counselor, Wellness Center, Chaplaincy, spiritual advisor, support group
• Follow up
WHAT TO DO WHEN A STUDENT CRIES

• Let them cry
• Offer a tissue if you’re in the same physical space
• Provide SILENCE
• Let them set the agenda
• Don’t let them see you sweat!
WHAT NOT TO DO

• Don’t assume
• Don’t say: I know how you feel
• Don’t use hackneyed expressions or religious sentiments
REFERENCES & CONTACT INFORMATION


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Thank you