

*TAFE NSW
Training and Education Support
Industry Skills Unit, Meadowbank*

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Manage clients and others experiencing loss and grief

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Flexible Learning Resource

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TOPIC 1 Manifestations and effect of grief and loss

As an endorsed enrolled nurse, you will require the knowledge and understanding of many aspects of loss, grief, dying, death and bereavement.

There are many ways to define loss. The Macquarie Dictionary (1997) defines it as being deprived of, or coming to be without something that a person has had. Loss can be actual or perceived, temporary or permanent and occurs when something can no longer be seen, heard, felt or experienced.

The death of a loved or valued person is the most common way we think of loss but many other important changes in one's life can involve loss and therefore grief. Losses relate to many factors such as relationships, health, freedom, and independence, spiritual and cultural matters and status. Loss could also occur in the normal life developmental processes.

Examples include the loss experienced by:

- separation
- divorce or relationship breakdown
- children leaving home
- the adoption of or relinquishment of a child
- unemployment, retrenchment or retirement
- loss of a pet
- infertility, still birth, miscarriage or abortion
- the loss of a person who is missing
- ageing
- dispossession of land
- when adolescent relinquishes dependency on parents
- life threatening illness or chronic illness
- death of a loved one – sudden, expected
- due to natural disasters e.g. flood, fire, cyclone etc.

Loss can be classified as either maturational or situational. Maturational loss occurs as a result of normal life transitions whereas situational loss occurs in response to sudden, unpredictable and specific events.



ACTIVITY 1

Using the examples of loss above, state whether they are maturational or situational.

Maturational

Situational

Grief is a normal reaction to a loss and is a process through which a person passes in order to recover from a loss. Grief has the potential to impact on every aspects of a person’s existence including physical, emotional, social, cognitive, behavioural and spiritual. Grief will not solely impact on a person’s life but also their significant others. The grieving person may experience a range of feelings dependent on where they are in the lifespan, developmental stages of life, their lifestyle and cultural background.

When multiple losses occur intense grief is experienced. Multiple losses may occur within one family at the same time (such as in a car accident) or many deaths in a short period of time such as in bushfires, shootings, train crash, earthquake, tsunami. They can have an immense impact on the survivors as well as on family and the wider community.

Elisabeth Kubler Ross after her work with terminal cancer patients proposed 5 stages of grief:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance



ACTIVITY 2

Using a relevant text book or the internet familiarise yourself with these five stages.



Suggested website

- http://changingminds.org/disciplines/change_management/kubler_ross/kubler_ross.htm
- http://www.businessballs.com/elisabeth_kubler_ross_five_stages_of_grief.htm#elisabeth_kubler-ross_five_stages_of_grief

Over time these 5 stages of grief were not exclusive to death and dying but were related to any loss a person had experienced.

It is important to remember that each person is unique and as such so will their reactions to loss and grief. Grief does not have to follow rules or theories. Grief is neither sequential or predictable.



ACTIVITY 2

Under the following headings, describe the impact that grief may have on the clients and their significant others.

1. PHYSICAL:

2. EMOTIONAL:

3. COGNITIVE / BEHAVIOURAL:

4. CULTURAL:

5. SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL DOMAINS:



Suggested websites

- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement <http://www.grief.org.au/support.html>
- Better health http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/su_griefandloss?OpenDocument
- Bonnie Babes Foundation <http://www.bbf.org.au/>
- Kids health <http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=287&id=1649>
- National Association for Loss and Grief (NSW) Inc (NALAG) <http://www.nalag.org.au/>
- Reach Out <http://www.reachout.com.au/index.asp?mci=3&mw=2&tii=18>
- The Compassionate Friends New South Wales Inc. <http://www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au/>



ACTIVITY 3

Provide an explanation for the following terms:

- a) Bereavement _____

- b) Mourning _____

- c) Grief _____

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