

Grief Role Play Assignment: A Participant

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Participant Session 10

This week for the role-play assignment our group went through session 10: Support and Communication. I took part in this group assignment as one of the participants where I went through different learning activities as discussions with other participants to learn about the importance of support and communication in bereaved individuals. In this specific discussion, the facilitator began with a formal introduction talking about how individuals can learn to support beavered people and help those in the grieving process. We started with talk time where we answered two specific questions: Why do we think bereaved people need most? and What do we think bereaved people need least? To answer the first question, as participants stated things like someone to listen to them, someone to check in on them, someone to provide support, and no judgment. To answer the second question, as participants stated that judgment, crochet answers like I am praying for you, and being told how to grieve are just a few of the things that are needed most. After we opened up our discussion to grief our group did activity 1 where we responded with a thumbs up or thumbs down to various questions regarding what would be helpful and what would not be a helpful way to show support to a grieving individual. In this assignment, most of the participants agreed on each answer but some of the more difficult questions like trying to make them laugh were more controversial as we all thought we would need more information on the given situation to assess if it would be helpful or not. After we went through the list, we decided to create a list of 10 tips to support someone who is grieving. In this activity some of the points suggested by the participants and the facilitators were cooking meals for someone who just lost someone, checking in on the individual once everything returns back to normal”, keeping an open line of communication, and many more. After the facilitator

led us through the conclusion I believe this activity was a great activity for us to share our thoughts on grief and how support and communication can be both helpful and hurtful.

This session of grief role play taught me tools that allow me to show support to those going through a hard time in various situations. One example of a way to show support that I loved hearing from a participant was creating a meal train to show support, when times get tough taking away some of the little stressors of daily life like trying to figure out what to eat for dinner, can be a way to show support in a little way. This reminds me of the stressors that were talked about in the article Attachment, Loss, and Complicated grief which states that a highly stressful event can be a highly disruptive experience (Shear 2005). From being a participant in this assignment I also learned that having a set of tools that you can use in your profession that relate to grief can be helpful for communication and support. For example, one participant shared about an activity that can be used in symbolic loss where you envision good memories with your current situation. This made me think of how children adjust to divorce and grief the loss of their parents living together but can come to the idea of liking their step-parents in remarriage. The adjustment problems that they might exhibit from this with the given support and communication, allowing them to safely talk about how they feel and not pressuring them into something can be helpful in a situation of symbolic grief (Faber 2010). Everyone's openness and collaboration in this session went very well. Everyone felt comfortable sharing and discussing even when opinions differed. For example, going through a few of the examples that were a little more controversial, if they showed support or not we were able to share what we all thought and come up with a conclusion to see in what scenarios it would be appropriate. Our group seems very comfortable with one another. The facilitator also did a phenomenal job this week leading

us and responding to what we had to say. I wouldn't suggest anything else to improve on. We all shared information and spent long periods of time discussing the topics, which went a lot better than the previous week.

A lot of the information that was discussed in our discussion was taken from information that we talked about in class. We made a lot of connections to symbolic loss and how to show support. For example, in medical-related loss, we shared that treating the individual the same/not thinking of them less can be a way of showing support. The article Diversity in adjustment to a leg amputation: Case illustrations of common themes, talks about how leg amputations can be a lot on an individual as they grieve the loss of life before the incipit procedure, or trauma (Rybarczyk 2004). Treating the individual as the same might help them realize even without a limb they are still the same person deep down and are still worthy of the love and attention although they are grieving. This can also relate to chronic illness. We talked about how many times people need support and normal communication right after the initial sickness, death, or trauma. For example, with chronic illness, this can be something that someone deals with for a prolonged period and might suffer silently (Rolland 1987). Besides just checking in on the individual to see how they are doing when they are visibly sick or in the hospital, continuing to check in on them as chronic illness can affect the individual, family, and relationships. Our group talked about support in communication in various different ways. As we talked about our future work in the careers we are seeking and how we can support our patients we might also need support. From readings, reminded me of the article Emotional Labor and Performance in the Field of Child Life: Initial Model Exploration and Implications for Practice, which talks about burn out rate and turnover of child life specialists as this field can be demanding and full of

trauma (Shuck 2013). I really like how this is related to our course work as this is the field I am pursuing and something that I do worry about as I endure the process of becoming a child life specialist. We talked about how asking for support isn't showing signs of weakness, how asking someone to do something with you that is unrelated to the grief and trauma you are facing can be showing support, as well as having open and honest conversations whether you are the one seeking the support or helping someone by letting them talk and you just listen, and how these are all important. I think the tools that our group talked about this week really helped me understand what it is like to show support to others and be understanding. As I continue the next steps to become a child life specialist I will keep these tools with me as I believe they are extremely helpful.

References

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