

Grief Role Play Assignment: Participant

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For this session, I was a participant in session 9: the grief cycle. For this session, we had two different facilitators who lead us through different activities to explore the grief process. To begin, one of the facilitators introduced the topics and gave us independent time to read through the 5 different stages of grief. We then all shared what we took away from reading about shock, disbelief, denial, awareness, and acceptance. For our group's talk time the facilitator asked how we can identify if someone is experiencing a stage of grief. We shared what we thought such as showing signs that it did not happen or them going on with their life without acceptance. We talked about what type of behavior they might exhibit such as anger, isolation, and hysteria. We also talked about what kind of support would be helpful. We said listening without judgment, checking in with them after the death has occurred and calmed down, and even encouraging them to heal from the event to try to find light in the dark situation. After we talked about the grief cycle we shared our own experiences with grief from our personal lives and how we entered the grief cycle and our own experience with it. We then concluded this activity by sharing what we learned about the stages of grief.

This activity has taught me a lot about grief and the grief cycle. The grief cycle is something that I have always heard about and read on but never discussed with other peers. Together as a whole, we were able to identify things that were helpful and things that were unhelpful. One thing that stood out to me the most in this assignment this week was when we brainstormed ways that we can help others in the cycle. I really took away from this that the grief cycle is normal and the thoughts and feelings one feels are unique to them and part of the process (Searlight 2005). We talked about how meeting someone where they are and allowing them to

feel what they are feeling is most important. Trying not to rush someone through the cycles or encourage them to move on from it can be detrimental to this process. In the article *Grief as Pathology*, it states, “set in motion by real loss (death); and its main purpose is to preserve the persons’ relations to the dead object, or—what comes to the same thing—to compensate for his loss. Furthermore, the conscious knowledge of his loss will never leave the normal person, as it does the melancholic” (Granek 2010). This quote helps show how one can simply not forget about grief so remembering this can be helpful when attempting to support others through the cycle. I also learned a lot about the grief cycle through listening to other participants’ own experiences with grief and loss. Specifically, a mother in our group who just dropped her son off at college. Although it was not a death, she shared about how she comes home from work and walks to his room forgetting he has moved out. How she is in the grief process and saddened by the loss of her son. This helped me understand that the grief process can look different for everyone. I shared about losing my aunt to chronic illness and how although we knew her prognosis I had a hard time grieving her loss as I had to be there to support her daughter, my cousin. The article *Chronic Illness and The Life Cycle* talks about the impact on families that chronic illness-related death can have on families and how even with readiness nothing can prepare oneself and one family for the loss (Rolland 1987). Chronic illness did affect my grief cycle with mourning my aunt. I was in shock and in full disbelief that the chronic illness had taken her life and that I would no longer see her.

Our own personal experiences with grief and loss are connected to the readings in our class. The article *Experiences of loss and chronic sorrow in persons with severe chronic illness* talk about the grief cycle through chronic illness (Ahlström 2007). We have read a lot about the

different types of loss in our lives and a common misconception is that I believed that the grief cycle was only for the loss of death, not symbolic loss. One classmate shared her experience with an uncle who had a traumatic brain injury and because of what I have learned and connected within this class we were able to discuss how this type of loss might go through the grief cycle. When thinking about the grief cycle I think of my mother and her journey with infertility and how she might have gone through the grief cycles while trying for a baby. The article by Belt states, "Pregnancy is a highly sensitive period in a woman's life involving a comprehensive re-organization of personal identity, in both the social and psychological realms" (Belt 2013). Because of this sensitive time, a mother, like my own, could experience and exhibit grief due to pregnancy. These are just a few of the topics that have been in our readings in this class thus far.

Overall I think that this week's session went very well. Everyone seems very comfortable with one another now therefore we have open and honest discussions about the topic. This week everyone was willing to share personal experiences which helped a lot in understanding this topic further. I think that when everyone shares we can all broaden our understanding of this topic. Everyone came prepared and help an in-depth discussion. I would not change anything this week. Overall the experience was very helpful.

References:

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