

HDFS 5013 Final Reflection

Kyla Johnson

Texas Woman's University

Professor Janice Moran

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Reflection for HDFS 5013

This course has taught me a lot about grief and the complexity surrounding grief, loss, and bereavement. Unfortunately, the loss is inevitable no matter how hard we avoid it. This semester has taught me skills to cope with grief and how I can implement the strategies in my future field as a child life specialist, how grief affects individuals through the different forms of loss, as well as taught me the importance of self care.

By furthering my knowledge and understanding of loss and grief I will be able to apply this knowledge to work as a child life specialist. Knowing how one copes with grief and loss but more specifically how a child will respond to loss is very important. In the article by Bonoti, it states that “An important reason for this difficulty is that the concept of death is not a simple notion. It incorporates social and cultural beliefs, personal and emotional issues, religious assumptions, and conceptual understandings (Slaughter, 2005)” (Bonoti et al., 2013). Children have to face things and concepts that are beyond their mental capacity and that is something very difficult. By learning this I will be able to talk to children in an appropriate way that they can understand. I also was able to learn various tools through our lab group work as we went through various activities that are fantastic tools to incorporate into child life. By looking at a loss through a child's lens and being more considerate of what they can understand I think that it can show how loss is important to talk about. Growing up it was always a topic that was avoided but being transparent and open to a child will help them go through the grief process more open to receive the best support needed. I wish this was something my parents had done with me at a

young age after losing relatives because it was hard for me to understand what death was and what the emotions I was experiencing were.

One of the huge key takeaways I learned from this course was the different types of grief and loss. Before this course, I always associated loss, grief, and bereavement with death. By the materials presented in this course, I now understand that symbolic loss, medical loss, and relationship loss, as well as types of attachment, can all present with loss, grief, and bereavement. For example, the article Attachment, Loss, and Complicated Grief talk about how any situation that brings attachment and is stripped away from an individual can cause stress levels and emotions (Shear 2005). Whether it is a symbolic loss where a friendship is a loss or a medical loss where a traumatic brain injury has occurred one might grieve. Grieve the relationship lost and how their friendship will forever look different or how their life will never be the same as it was before the accident and they must adjust to a new way of living with limitations. Leaving the bonds that have been formed is another type of grief I had a bias about. I always thought these were just common emotions but as Rothaupt states in his article loss warrants comfort, and with comfort one begins to heal (Rothaupt 2007). This article and understanding taught me the importance of support. I am the type of person that likes to face conflicts alone, so when I had these emotions I just brushed them off, but rather I was seeking comfort and validation for the losses I had just experienced. Going into my profession this is something that I need to be aware of, I have to be aware that the feelings might be a reaction to a loss even if it is not death.

Loss, grief, and bereavement are all very heavy topics, and if anything this class has taught me the importance of self-care. Going into a field where I am guaranteed to see these

things it is important for me to learn how to create a self-care routine to avoid job burnout and fatigue. When this type of profession endures these hardships day in and day out they are at risk for fatigue and burnout as the things they see tend to weigh on them heavily (Fisackerly 2015). By reading the powerful information in this article I have already started to establish a self-care routine to create a work-life balance. I have started to implement self-care into my daily routine where I take anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour to read, work out, go for a walk, or take time for myself to create healthy boundaries. Although I have not started working yet, I know creating these habits now will help me avoid burnout in the future. Overall I found this course to be super helpful in furthering my understanding. I am excited to take the lessons that I have learned into my future career.

Resources

Bonoti, F., Leondari, A., & Mastora, A. (2013). Exploring children's understanding of death: Through drawings and the death concept questionnaire. *Death studies*, 37(1), 47-60.

Fisackerly, B. L., Sira, N., Desai, P. P., & McCammon, S. (2015). An examination of compassion fatigue risk in certified child life specialists. *Children's Health Care*.

Rothaupt, J. W., & Becker, K. (2007). A literature review of Western bereavement theory: From deathecting to continuing bonds. *The Family Journal*, 15(1), 6-15.

Shear, K., & Shair, H. (2005). Attachment, loss, and complicated grief. *Developmental Psychobiology: The Journal of the International Society for Developmental Psychobiology*, 47(3), 253-267.