

Loss and Grief

Chapter 20

Learning Objectives

Lesson 20.1: Loss and Grief

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1. Describe two characteristics of loss.
2. Illustrate four behaviors associated with loss.
3. Describe the stages of the grieving process.
4. Explain the differences between anticipatory, healthy, and unresolved grief.
5. Compare the reactions to being diagnosed with a potentially fatal illness with those of having a terminal diagnosis.

Learning Objectives

Lesson 20.1: Loss and Grief

(Slide 2 of 2)

- 6. Describe how cultural factors can influence attitudes about death, grief, and mourning.
- 7. Outline each stage of the dying process.
- 8. Explain the meaning of a “good death.”
- 9. Describe the support given by nurses who provide hospice care for terminally ill persons.

The Nature of Loss

(Slide 1 of 3)

- Loss has several meanings
 - To lose
 - To bring about the destruction of
 - To become unable to find
 - To misplace
 - To fail to keep
 - To have taken from one by accident, separation, or death
- Loss is a very individual and personal experience
 - Everyone must cope with some form of loss in life

The Nature of Loss

(Slide 2 of 3)

- Losses can be classified as:

- External losses

- Losses outside the individual

- Internal losses

- Losses that involve some part of oneself

- Characteristics of loss

- Loss is an actual or potential state

- Real, potential, or imagined
- Temporary or permanent
- Maturational or situational
- Expected or unexpected

- Depends on the value, importance, and significance of the loss to the individual

The Nature of Loss

(Slide 3 of 3)

- Behaviors associated with loss

- It is important to understand how people at various developmental stages react to loss
- Preschoolers cannot understand a permanent loss such as death
- School-age children often feel that God or the Devil took a loved one
- Between 9 and 10 years of age, children perceive loss as adults do
- Adults who are facing loss are able to perceive events more abstractly than are younger individuals

The Nature of Grief and Mourning

(Slide 1 of 5)

- The grieving process

- A method of resolving losses and healing or recovering
- A healing process that encourages individuals to continue on, even after a loss
- First studied by Sigmund Freud in the early 1900s

The Nature of Grief and Mourning

(Slide 2 of 5)

- Stages of the grieving process

- Denial

- Begins with a feeling of shock
- One wants to reject the loss

- Yearning

- Crying, self-blame, and anger are common, and some may even strike out at self or others

- Depression and identification

- Feelings of guilt and remorse

The Nature of Grief and Mourning

(Slide 3 of 5)

- Stages of the grieving process
 - Acceptance and recovery
 - When grieving individuals begin to focus their energies on the living
- The grieving process is dynamic, and most individuals do not move through the process in a step-by-step way

The Nature of Grief and Mourning

(Slide 4 of 5)

- Anticipatory grief
 - Becoming aware of an impending loss
- Unresolved grief
 - Unhealthy or ineffective grief reactions
 - Bereavement-related depression
 - Loss felt so intensely that feelings of despair and worthlessness overwhelm the client
 - Complicated grief
 - Persistent yearning for a deceased person
 - Therapeutic interventions
 - Involve listening, providing emotional support, and referring to appropriate resources

The Nature of Grief and Mourning

(Slide 5 of 5)

- Caregivers' grief

- Relationships are formed between caregivers and clients that develop into understanding and rapport
- Caregivers experience the same grief as others
- Caregivers' roles can become complicated if their personal feelings of grief overshadow their effectiveness

The Dying Process

(Slide 1 of 6)

- Dying is the last stage of growth and development
- The process of dying remains unchanged, but attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding death are as variable as the individuals who practice them
- Death can occur suddenly or gradually
 - More than two-thirds of all deaths now occur in health care facilities, hospitals, and nursing homes

The Dying Process

(Slide 2 of 6)

- Age differences and dying

- By 12 years of age, children are aware that death is irreversible

- As people grow older, they begin to face their own mortality

- Parents should communicate with the dying child
- Siblings of the dying child also need extra attention

The Dying Process

(Slide 3 of 6)

- Terminal illness

- A condition in which the outcome is death
- Grieving occurs throughout the course of the illness
- Responsiveness and preparation for death depend on:
 - Meaning of death to the individual
 - Coping mechanisms used throughout life

- The diagnosis of a fatal illness or condition is received with disbelief and shock

The Dying Process

(Slide 4 of 6)

- Potentially fatal illness
 - Can bring forth a variety of reactions
 - Acts as a wake-up call and a motivator for the client to make major lifestyle changes
 - Caregivers should accept and support clients' decisions about terminal illness

The Dying Process

(Slide 5 of 6)

- Cultural factors, dying, and mourning
 - Cultural practices regarding dying, grief, and mourning have a strong influence on behaviors
 - Nurses must be careful to assess and understand the meaning of each client's cultural, religious, and social practices
 - Do not assume how a client feels about his or her cultural beliefs and practices

The Dying Process

(Slide 6 of 6)

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's five stages of dying

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

- Simplified now into three basic phases

- Resistance
- Working
- Acceptance

Therapeutic Interventions

- “Good” death
 - One in which the dying and the living participate fully and completely
 - Individual controls his or her own destiny
 - Individuals are not afraid of death
- Never limit your clients by placing labels on them

Hospice Care

- In the past

- Most dying individuals were cared for in the home by family and friends

- In the present

- Most people no longer die in their homes but in care facilities

- Hospice

- A philosophy of care for people with terminal illnesses or conditions

- Goal of hospice is to make the remainder of an individual's life as meaningful and comfortable as humanly possible

Meeting the Needs of Dying Clients

- One of the most urgent needs is to be free from pain and discomfort
 - Addiction is not an issue in care for the terminally ill population
- Dying clients need to know that someone who really cares for their welfare is there to help
- Respect is always an important factor in caring for clients

Loss, Grief, and Mental Health

- For persons who currently have a mental health disorder, the stresses of loss and grief can overwhelm delicate coping mechanisms, leading to additional problems
- Encourage effective coping skills, and provide physical and emotional support

Questions?