Permission to Grieve: An Interactive Workshop for Caregivers

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Overview

1. Caregiving
2. How professionals grieve
3. The nuances of grief in the context of dementia
4. Importance of community
5. Community grief exercise in 4 parts

“...[Caregiving] provides a place to encounter [life], engage its impulse towards fragmentation, and its inclinations for infinity.”

Jennifer Kaufman, MFA

To Grieve Like Everyone Else...

stigma
unprofessional

weakness
culture of cure

Granek et al. J of Pall Med 2012
To Grieve Like Everyone Else…

Permission = Training

To Grieve Like Everyone Else…

“It keeps me awake at night”
“You just become somewhat accustomed to it…”
“It is a very bad thing to become emotionally attached to your patients because you’re going to suffer”
“I have to keep reminding myself to have a little bit of dissociation…”

Dementia Grief

Compounded Serial Losses
Ambiguous and Fluctuating Losses
Receding of the Known Self


Disruptions in Communication & awareness
Loss of opportunities for resolution

Noyes et al Amer Jour of Alzheimer’s Disease & Other Dementias. 2010
Santulli RB, Blandin K. The Emotional Journey of the Alzheimer’s Family 2015
Blandin K and R Pepin Dementia (London) 2016

Path to Healing

Acknowledge Loss
Tolerate Difficult Feelings
Adaptation

Power of Community

Who Has the Right to Mourn?
Relational Deference and the Ranking of Grief

“How hideous, that there should be a pecking order in my grief” from Wave, by Sonali Deraniyagala (2013)

“Never cry louder than the widow”—Anon

“Relational by definition, grief is influenced by others’ witness, acknowledgement and validation”
Harvey Peskin

Psychoanalytic Dialogues, in press
Power of Community

Instructions: Part 1
Select 2 DIFFERENT colored pieces of paper.

Instructions: Part 1
Breathe

Instructions: Part 1
Write a letter
I hope that you are…

Ground Rules for Sharing
1) Whatever is shared in this room stays in this room.
2) Read without preface or preamble. Just read.
3) Listen without interruption or comment. Just listen.

Pick a Partner and Begin

Instructions: Part 2
Write a reply
How would they respond to what you have written?
Ground Rules for Sharing

1) Whatever is shared in this room stays in this room.
2) Read without preface or preamble. Just read.
3) Listen without interruption or comment. Just listen.

Share with your same Partner

Instructions: Part 3

Experience of grief in the context of community
Tear your partner’s letters
Share…
what you notice
what you observe
what you feel

Instructions: Part 4

Witnessing grief as a path to healing
Create new connections
Layer
Interweave
Recreate

Thank YOU for sharing

“…the self is injured when one’s right to grieve is withheld, overlooked or otherwise curtailed”
~ Harvey Peskin

Questions? Comments

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