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AMF Webinar-Living with Grief in College

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Living with Grief in College

Actively Moving Forward with Grief, a
Webinar Series by National Students
of AMF



Webinar Objectives

- Experience of the road trip: As time goes by after a loss, what does the grieving experience look like?
- Vehicle Maintenance: How might the roles of counseling, introspection, and peer support change over time?
- Planning/Maximizing the road trip: What are some active ways of dealing with grief?

Grief as a Road Trip



- The “Winding Road” of Grief
 - The “Pit stops” of Grief
- Considering Weather and Road Condition

Grief as a Winding Road

- Stroebe and Schut's Dual Process Model for Coping – ex. 24 year old woman, 7 months after the death of her mother
 - Loss Orientation
 - Restoration Orientation
 - Oscillation



The Pit Stops of Grief

- Moos and Schaeffer's Tasks of Coping – Ex. 21 year old woman, 11 months after the deaths of two hall mates.
- Task 1: Establishing personal meaning or significance
 - *College has become more meaningful to me. I was going to work with one of the girls in the accident once we graduated. She was going to build her ministry, and I was going to help run it. We had our lunch meetings in Paris all imagined with our husbands and everything. I was going to help her publish her books. All of this means more to me because now I feel like I need to get a degree and help someone else build a ministry. I feel like I should take a trip to Paris one day for my husband in honor of her. I watch a certain movie and always think of her.*

- Task 2: Confront reality
 - *Yes, I think of those girls in almost everything I do. When they were around, I just thought, I can go visit them later. Now, I think this one would've liked this or that one would've liked that. It's hard to walk past certain departments on campus or see certain people because they were friends with them.*
- Task 3: Sustain interpersonal relationships
 - *School became very difficult. I feel that I didn't make as many friendships or as quality of friendships because I was so depressed and angry for a period of time. I feel like my friendships suffered.*

- Task 4: Preserving emotional balance
 - *I was actually, am actually, a little frustrated with it because I would have loved to spend time to get over things, or deal with the deaths, but I had no time.*
- Task 5: Preserve sense of self-efficacy/self-concept
 - *I thought college would be a safe haven, but it turned out not to be. Everyone always says that the friends you make in college are the ones you keep for life. When I was in my darkest hour, the people I considered to be my friends abandoned me.*

Weather and Road Condition



Importance of
campus climate
and culture

- Illene Cupit's application of Ecological Systems Theory
- David Balk's notion of disenfranchisement

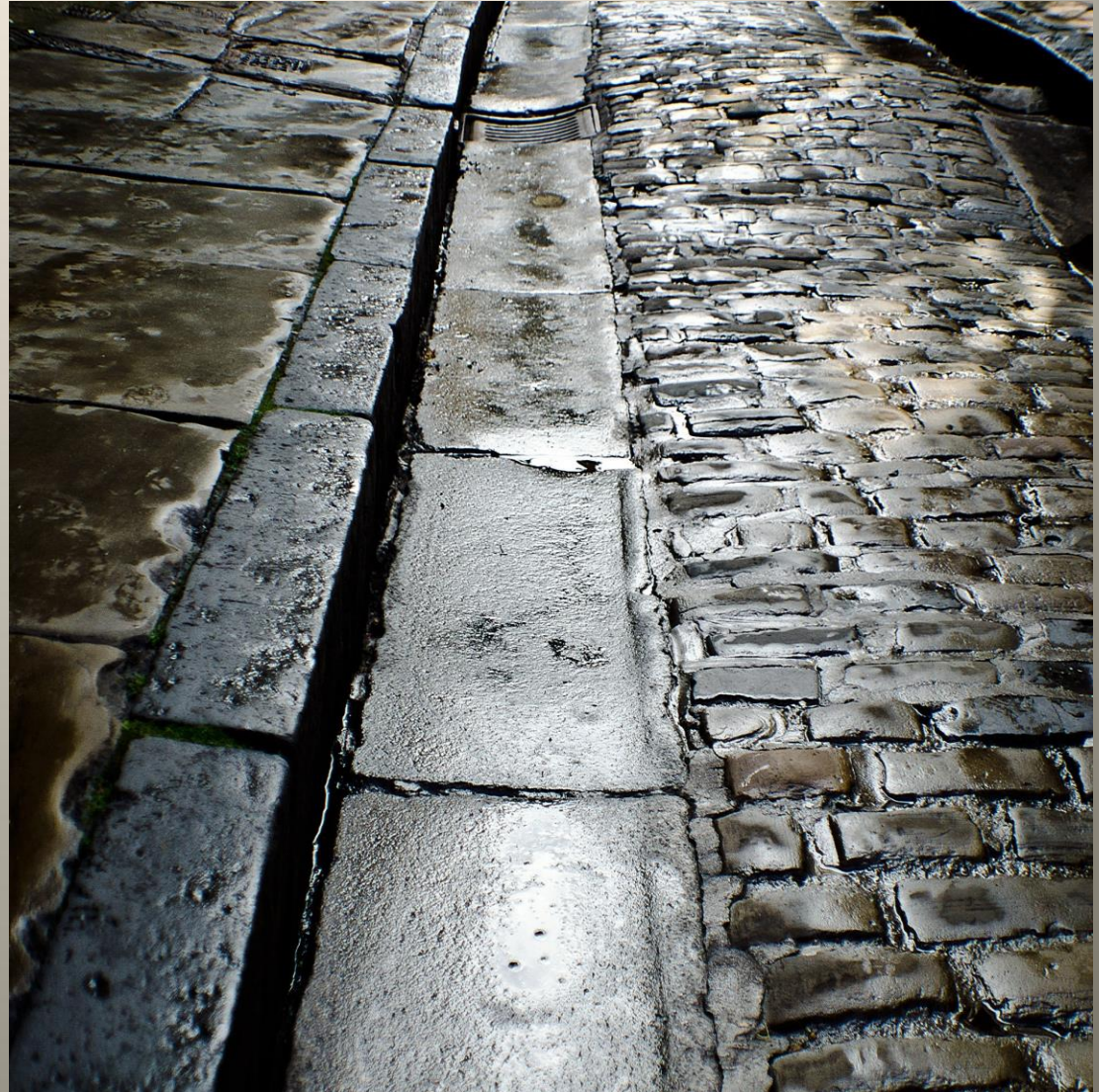
Vehicle Maintenance



- Factors that influence how the vehicle runs on the road trip
 - Different paths taken on the road trip
 - Effectiveness of vehicle maintenance

Factors Influencing Grief

- Type of death/degree of trauma
- Type and closeness of relationship
- History of loss experiences
- Current life situation and available resources



Different Paths of Grief

- Bonanno's grief trajectories
- Resilient
 - *Perhaps I am unaware, but I don't think that I reacted externally. I seemed to have grieved during the time of the funeral. While I was home I was sad. But after the funeral, I feel as though all negative feelings were gone. Now I just have appreciation for her life and remember her fondly.*
(19 year old man, 7 months after the death)

- Recovery

- *College has become more of a challenge to me because I cannot concentrate like I was once able to in school. In the past semester, I have become better “plugged in” and gotten a little more back on track, but I am still not the strong student I once was. (19 year old woman, 11 months after the death)*

- Enduring

- *College has become a little less meaningful to me, and I cannot wait to get out. At times I see no point in continuing and wish that I had been with my roommate (in her accident) but feel I don’t want to leave my current friends behind because I know how they would feel. I just continue and try to get through each day one at a time. (21 year old woman, 11 months after the death)*

How long does grief last?

- Considering all individual factors, it may take 6 months to 1 year or more, generally speaking, for “uncomplicated” grief of college students to reach a new place of balance.



- *Other than being depressed at times, my college experience did not truly change except for one semester. The first semester after the death was greatly shaped by the deep and dark emotions I felt following the death. However, after a short time, I recovered, and the very next semester things were back to normal. So my college experience did change for a short while but not permanently. (18 year old man, 9 months after the death)*
- *In the beginning (the first 6 months) college was not at all important. The only reason I stayed was that my parents kept pep talking me into staying and I didn't want to really go through the mess of trying to come back or transfer classes with the nursing school. Although it has improved today, I still at times would rather be at home with my family than here. (21 year old woman, 10 months after the death)*

Grief Maintenance



- Role of counseling
- Role of introspection
- Role of peer support

Planning/Maximizing the Road Trip

- Consider Worden's tasks of grief coping
- Identify your personal approach to grief
 - Consider importance of counseling, introspection (spirituality/religiosity), and peer support to you
- Consult Balk's exercises for applying models of coping



Worden's Tasks of Grief Coping

Example: Current graduate student who lost her father as an undergraduate sophomore

- Task 1: Accept reality
 - *I don't sweat the small stuff anymore. Not at all.*
- Task 2: Process pain of grief
 - *I let the grief take me where I need to go. Pain is not "bad." Besides, there's more to healing than dealing with pain.*
- Task 3: Adjust to a new world without the person
 - Mother and sister both "gave her away" at her wedding.
- Task 4: Find enduring connection with the person in the new world
 - Got a tattoo with the words "It is Well" and four birds representing her family members, including her father.

Intuitive and Instrumental Grieving

- Intuitive
 - Experience and express emotion
 - Focus on relationship
 - AMF Support Group
- Instrumental
 - Observe and reflect on loss cognitively
 - Problem solve and engage in action
 - AMF Service Group

Balk's Applications



- Exercise for Applying Moos and Schaefer Model (p. 75)
- Exercise to reflect on one's interpersonal connectedness (p. 235)
 - See Balk, D. E. (2011). *Helping the bereaved college student*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company



To where does your grief lead?