Resilient Coping: Facing Life Course Realities Plus a Pandemic and Community Upheaval

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An overview of facets of loss, personal and communal

The process will move from self-awareness to aging, to shattered dreams to Covid19, ambiguous loss to addressing complex losses

Responses of reasonable hope and resiliency promotion

Discussion included
The Guest House

This being human is a guesthouse. Every morning is new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Beginning lines of a poem by Rumi
Midlife to Aging
Some Potential Tensions

Valuing Wisdom vs. Valuing Physical Power

Generativity vs. "Over the Hill"

Socializing vs. Isolation

Emotional and Mental Flexibility vs. Rigidity

Years Yet to Live vs. Years Lived

Independence vs. "The Caught Generation" (caught between yourself and others)

Richard Hey / Ted Bowman
Losses in Later Life
(different from earlier periods)

- Rapidity of Losses
- Finality of Losses
- The Ever-Present Character of Loss – for oneself and one’s peers
- Losses Are Cumulative
- Meanings Attached to Losses (dignity, independence, safety, etc.)
- Loss of the Future Story

Scott Sullender
A 4 Legged Stool

Typical Losses
Common, response traditions

Shattered Dreams
Personal, identity, meaning

The State of the World
Sadness/worry, collective loss

Covid19
Ambiguity, anxiety, unclear future
Is a time when predictability breaks down

Our predictable ways of thinking about and doing things are interrupted by change

Change results in uncertainty
**Transition** is the process of letting go of the way things used to be and taking hold of the way they subsequently become .... Transition is the way we all come to terms with change.

William Bridges
Definitions

**LOSS** Refers To Being Deprived Of Or Ceasing To Have Something That One Formerly Possessed Or To Which One Was Attached

**Grief** Is A Whole Body Response To Loss:

- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Spiritual
- Visceral
Factors That **Exacerbate** Losses

- Loss Or Stress Accumulation/Overload
- Loss Of Control Or Power
- Losses Which Break Normative Rules
- Losses Which Violate "Moral" Expectations
- Losses That Stretch Developmental Abilities
- Losses Which Reinforce Or Precipitate Family Conflict
- Disenfranchised Losses
- When Basic Needs and Losses Overlap
- Losses Which Continue To Require Adjustment After Onset
- Ambiguous Losses
- Loss Of Dreams
3 Questions for Grieving People

What’s lost?

What remains?

What’s possible for me?

(Schneider, 1994)
Ambiguous Loss

Losses that are:
unclear,
confusing, and for which
future stories / outcomes
are unknown

Etymology: “driven in both ways”
Boss
Ambiguity occurs when there are...

Unanswered questions, uncertainty and the disruption of family and work life due to Covid19

“What is distressing us is not just the virus, but the ambiguity surrounding it, what it will do, and what we should do about it. Science provides some answers, but we are experiencing uncertainty, and that’s very stressful for a society that is accustomed to solving problems and having definitive answers.”

Pauline Boss
Ambiguity Conundrum

Psychological Presence and Physical Absence

Physical Presence and Psychological Absence
Differences: Chronic Sorrow and Complicated Grief

- Both contain sorrow that can be ongoing
- Both contain elements of depressive emotions and experience
- The Key Difference Is The Ability To Grow Life, Experience Joy And Fullness Regularly, Even While Also Grieving
Assumptive World

All of us from the moment of our birth, have been building inside ourselves a model of the world, a set of assumptions on the basis of which we recognize the world that we meet and plan our behaviour accordingly. Because this model is based on reality it is, most of the time, a valid and useful basis for thought and behaviour. We rely on the accuracy of these assumptions to maintain our orientation in the world and to control our lives.

Anything which challenges this model incapacitates us.

C.M.Parkes
Shattered Dreams

Losing An Emotionally Important Image Of Oneself, One's Family, One's Life, One's Work, Even One's Death

Losing The Possibilities Of "What Might Have Been"

Abandonment Of Plans For A Particular Future

The Dying Of A Dream
Examples of Shattered Dreams and Elders

• the dream of retirement
• the dream about how or where a home "should be"
• the dream of time for self (autonomy/control)
• the dream of being or seen as competent
• the dream that the family relationship could withstand any stress or challenge
• the American dream of "social security"
• the dream that plans would be sufficient
• the dream of dying and death
Shattered Dreams
And Bereavement

The dream of death – how, where, when, who
The dream of the funeral
The dream of dying
The dream of retirement, travel, marriage, travel, expectation unfulfilled
The dream of being touched
The dream of an “uncomplicated” death
The dream of never being alone
Shattered Dreams and Recent Community Upheaval

- A kind of stability even in the midst of the pandemic
- An assumed social contract
- Loss accumulation and overload
- Present and future stories - generational
- Naivete about historical trauma
- Relationships, neighborhoods, shops and stores
- Flashbacks, past trauma
- American solidarity
Inquiries About Shattered Dreams

- When you pictured this time in your life, what did you picture?

- When you thought about being _____, what did you picture?

- If and when you thought of losses in your family, how did you think it would be, how would it happen?

- Tell me about the plans you and (the name) of the person had?
Responses To Loss

Name Losses

Grieve Losses

Put The Loss In Perspective

Reinforce Or Build Support Connections
(Support Groups, Teams, Informal Support)

Set Limits
(Saying No To Some Things So That You Can Yes To Others)

Develop A Healing Plan

Find Joy/Promote Hope

Use Rituals For Grieving And Healing
Storying And Restorying After Loss

Involves Grieving The Old Story

Before Creating The Next (Not Necessarily New) Story

Listen For

Major Components/Themes/Values Of The Old Story

How Can They Be Reframed In The Next Story?
Resiliency/ Hardiness

- The capacity to spring back, rebound, and successfully adapt to adversity – Bowman from many sources

- The capacity to spring forward …

- Resilience arises from ordinary resources and processes – Masten

- The ability to connect, reconnect, and resist disconnection in response to hardships, adversities
Dual-processing model
(Stroebe and Schut 2001)

Loss Orientation
- Grief work
- Intrusion of grief
- Denial
- Sorting, choices
- Autonomy

Restoration Orientation
- Attending to life changes
- Doing new things
- Distraction, denial, avoidance of grief
- New roles, identities, relationships
Compassion optimally involves a quality of presence that conveys stability and resilience, with a balanced concern and heartfelt connection, but is not depleting or overwhelming to either person.
Hope

Definitions usually include:
EXPECTATION

DESIRE

Which can involve GOALS, ATTRIBUTES, REDEFINITION, MEANING, PEACE, ENERGY
Reasonable Hope

Reasonable hope is relational

Reasonable hope is a practice

Reasonable hope maintains that the future is open, uncertain, and influenceable

Reasonable hope seeks goals and pathways to them

Reasonable hope accommodates doubt, contradictions, and despair

Weingarten
ONLINE DISCUSSION