



**GOLDSTEIN FAMILY
GRIEF CENTER**

HOC NAVIGATORSSM



**HAMILTON COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH**

Losing a Loved One to an Overdose: Special Considerations for First Responders

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Defining Grief

- ***Acute Grief*** – Early period of loss, intense feelings, yearning, painful emotions (anxiety, anger, remorse, guilt). Very focused on grief.
 - ***Adapting to Loss*** – Accepting reality and restoring the capability for wellbeing.
 - ***Integrated Grief*** – Lasting form of grief. Described as “bittersweet” the grief doesn’t dominate life, “resides in the background” but activated at times (holidays, birthdays, etc).
 - ***Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)*** – Persistent, pervasive and interferes with functioning.
- The Columbia Center for Complicated Grief

Mediators of Mourning

“Mourning behavior is multidetermined”

- Kinship – Who died
- Nature of the attachment
- How the person died
- Historical Antecedents
- Personality Variables
- Social Variables
- Concurrent Losses and Stresses



Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy – Fifth Edition
J. William Worden

“The many colors of grief...”



EMOTIONAL
REACTIONS



BEHAVIORS



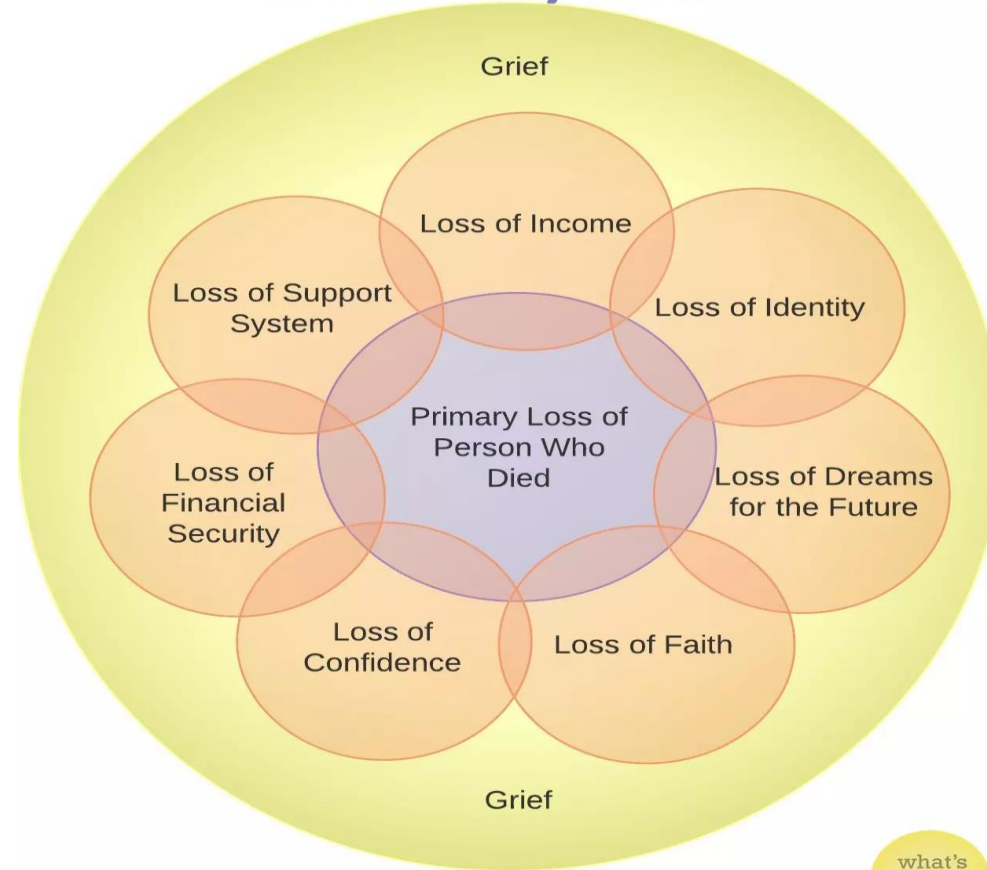
PHYSICAL
SENSATIONS



COGNITIVE

Secondary Losses

Secondary Losses



<http://whatsyourgrief.com>

what's
your
grief?

Anticipatory Grief

- The distress a person may feel in the days, months or even years before the death of a loved one or other impending loss or life change.

Social Workers, Rise!

Cycles of Anticipatory Grief:

- Accepting that death inevitable
 - Feeling concern for the dying person
 - Rehearsing the death
 - Imagining the future
- Forbes Health



Disenfranchised Grief

Grief that people experience when they incur a loss that is not or can not be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported.

- Kenneth J. Doka



Components of Disenfranchised Grief



Relationship not
recognized

Loss not
recognized

Griever not
recognized

Stigma attached
to the death

Grieving process
does not fit the
norms of society

Why it Matters

- Social support mitigates grief reactions and supports the mourner
- Humans benefit from having friends, families and communities bear witness to their suffering and loss
- Telling the story helps to process emotions and integrate grief
- Combatting and overcoming stigma that comes with a substance-involved loss



Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) DSM-5TR and ICD 11



Prolonged grief disorder happens when someone loses someone close, and they experience an intense yearning/longing for or preoccupation with the deceased person. Their bereavement lasts longer than social norms and causes distress or problems functioning.

American Psychiatric Association

Risk Factors for Prolonged Grief Disorder

More often in females
and with older age

An unexpected or
violent death, such as
death from a car
accident, or the murder
or suicide of a loved one

Death of a child

Close or dependent
relationship to the
deceased person

Social isolation or loss
of a support system or
friendships

History of depression,
separation anxiety or
post-traumatic stress
disorder (PTSD)

Traumatic childhood
experiences, such as
abuse or neglect

Other major life
stressors, such as major
financial hardships

From: Mayo Clinic

THE "STAGES OF GRIEF"



REALITY



Range of Emotions following death from overdose

Shock that it happened coupled with “I knew it was coming”

Blame (self, victim, failure of multiple systems)

Shame

Guilt

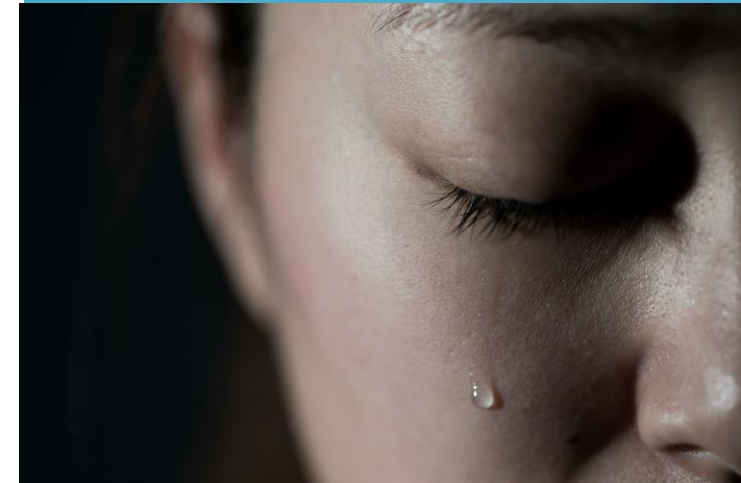
Fear and Anxiety (“Inability to relinquish the vigilance of dread”)

Anger

Isolation

Unknowns surrounding death

Relief



Styles of Grieving

Intuitive Grief	Instrumental Grief
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced as waves of emotion• Expression mirrors inner feelings and emotions• More feeling than thinking• Focused on exploring and expressing feeling and processing emotions• Low physical energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced in more physical and cognitive ways• Expression is more physical, cognitive, or behavioral• More thinking than feeling• Focused on doing and more actively responding to grief• High physical energy, anxiety

Styles of Grieving Continued



Blended Grievers

- Share experiences, expressions and adaptation strategies of both intuitive and instrumental grievers
- Will often have varied experiences and use strategies depending on the relationship to the deceased, the situation experiences and time since the loss

Dissonant Grievers

- Grievers that encounter a conflict between the way they experience their grief internally and the way they express it externally
- May be due to family, cultural or social traditions causing internal conflict

Coping Strategies and Techniques

Intuitive	Instrumental
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to grieve, adjust slowly• Share feelings• Active listening• Exploration/expression of feelings• Catharsis and insight• Connection and sharing with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Readjust/ restore normal routines• Solve problems related to loss• Practical information• Exploration of changes/impact• Activities and projects• Memorializing the person who passed

Advice for an overdose loss



- Acknowledge the reality of the circumstances of the death.
- Don't define your loved one by his/her addiction.
- Find healthy ways of acknowledging, validating and expressing your feelings.
- Learn about addiction. Understanding the struggle your loved one had may decrease feelings of guilt rather than having them spiral into unhealthy and untruthful proportions.
- Research what specific resources are available in the area for an overdose or addiction loss.
- Seek professional help from a therapist or your doctor for reactions that persist and may interfere with functioning.

Resources after an Overdose Loss

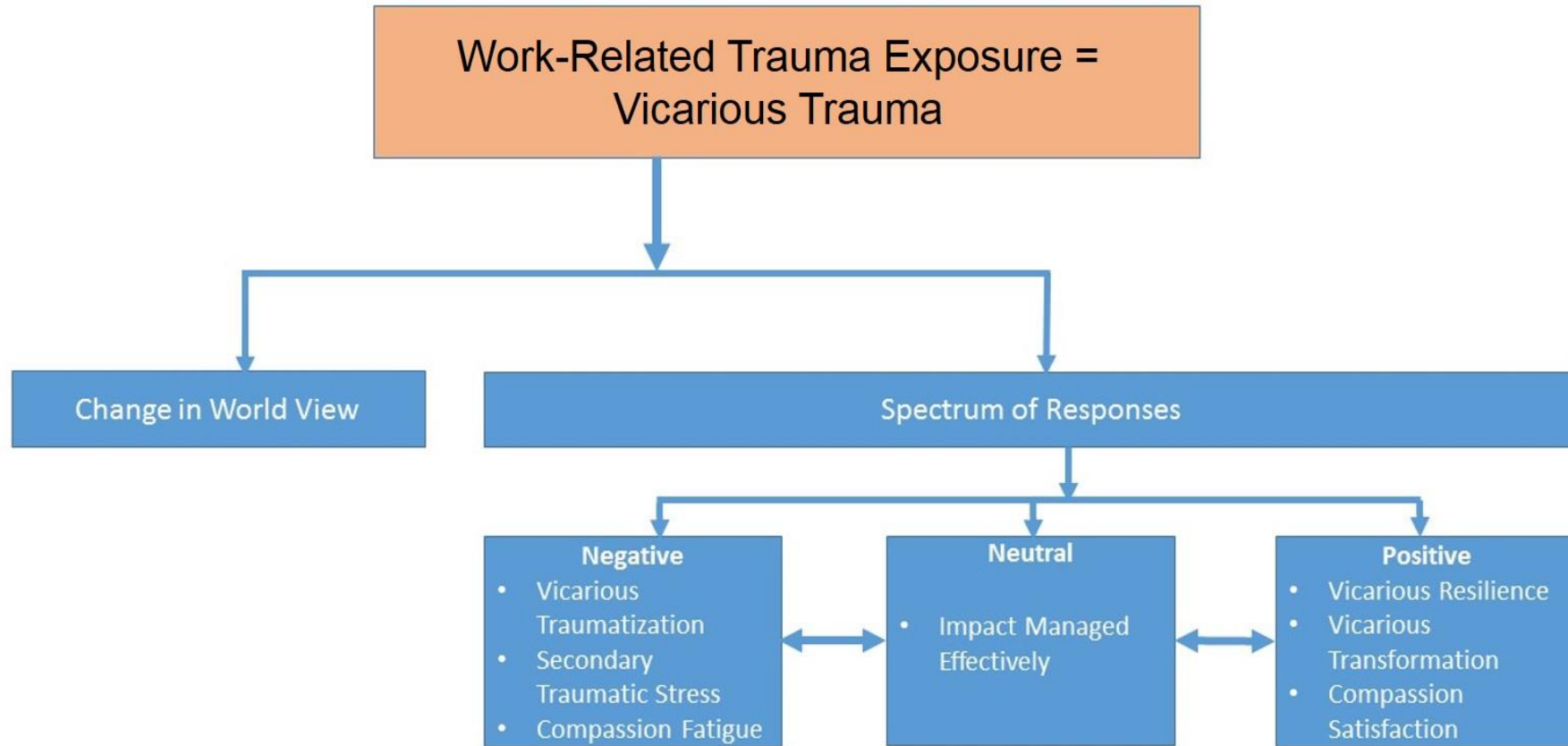


- Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP)
- Compassionate Friends
- Companions on a Journey Grief Support
- Learn to Cope
- Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)
- Goldstein Family Grief Center
- Fernside Center for Grieving Children
- Hospice of Cincinnati
- Crossroads Hospice



Caring for Yourself

Vicarious Trauma Toolkit Model



Caring for yourself – Mitigating the Impact of Vicarious Trauma

- Acknowledge impact of work on wellbeing
Avoid numbing emotions
- Take care of your body
Sleep, exercise, hydration (we hold trauma in our bodies)
- Reach out to coworkers / leaders for support
It helps to talk to someone who gets it
- Incorporate rituals of remembrance/honor those who have died