



SW 790-006 Spring 2012:

Complicated Grief and Mourning—Treatment approaches across the lifespan

INSTRUCTORS:

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Meeting times: 8:30 – 4:30 (promptly) Wednesday, May 23, 2012 and Friday, June 1, 2012

Location: TBD SSW

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course addresses the theoretical framework and clinical interventions for complicated grief and mourning from culturally diverse and lifespan perspectives. It seeks to provide information about the normal course of grief and the events and circumstances that create complicated grief reactions that interfere with integration of loss and adaptation after mourning. This interpersonal practice minicourse can augment the HBSE 617 course or can be taken independently. Attention is focused on life span development and the meaning of complicated grief and mourning at different ages. Various types of complicated grief are discussed from individual, family, and socio/cultural perspectives. The importance of distinguishing normal grieving from depression, complicated grief and post-traumatic stress will be addressed. Clinical interventions for depression, normal grief, complicated grieving will be addressed. The course will emphasize coping and resiliency in individual, family, and community responses and the diversity of human response and will focus on the significance of using social groups in acknowledging grief and addressing mourning. The formation and practice of rituals, and diversity in religious and spiritual experience as a component of grieving will be discussed. This minicourse does not overlap with minicourse 'Trauma and its Treatment', but can be seen as the complementary minicourse in the clinical work of addressing loss and trauma.

COURSE OUTLINE:

This course will begin with an overview of grief, mourning and the factors that complicate grieving. These include both environmental challenges, the extent of the loss, and the challenge of multiple losses. The theory of complicated mourning will be introduced and will be related both to developmental/attachment theory and trauma theory. Examples of complicated mourning will be integrated, including the identification and assessment of symptoms of complicated mourning, and treatment strategies will be discussed. Significant attention will be placed on understanding the diversity of reactions to loss within different contexts. The impact of poverty, stigma and social marginalization will be discussed and treatment strategies addressed on individual, family, and group levels. Models for treatment will include: psychodynamic models, attachment models, stress and crisis models, cognitive and behavior models, sociobiological models, and mindfulness/imagery-based models. The social work role addressing grief and complicated mourning in hospices, palliative care units, health care systems, residential facilities like nursing homes and schools will be discussed. Gender, age, cultural and ethnic differences necessitate the adaptation of treatment techniques as well as broader cultural implications of loss for social groups. The development of resiliencies in working through complicated grief will be addressed at both the individual and communal levels.

OBJECTIVES:

1. From this minicourse students will gain an understanding of the impact of complicated grief on functioning.
2. Students will gain skill in clinical interventions for complicated grief and distinguishing it from simple grief, depression, and from trauma.
3. Students will learn treatment techniques for complicated grief, including the following:
 - Assessment—which will include evaluation of individual strengths, how the individual has coped through different developmental stages, the individual's coping skills, ways of creating relationships with others and gaining support from others. Self-regulation and self-soothing techniques are evaluated including individual ways of emotion regulation and settling down emotions, ability to stay present in activities, meaning of spirituality or religion, connection to physical body, and impact of shame on individual.
 - Treatment planning-- for individuals affected by both simple grief reaction (often called 'normal grief') or complicated grief reaction to loss, including chronic, multiple loss, stigmatized loss, unacknowledged loss.
4. Students will be able to summarize the different theoretical models for treating complicated grief.
5. Students will learn differential diagnosis and treatment for grief-related depression.

COURSE DESIGN:

Lecture and class discussion, role play, invited guests, and video to highlight specific topics. Small group discussion on some topics.

RELATIONSHIP TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES:

Multiculturalism and Diversity Themes are addressed through the discussion of worker-client differences and power/privilege differentials based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, and social class. Social system and case examples, possible interventions and readings will reflect this theme.

Social Change and Social Justice are addressed through discussion of differences between problems that are responsive to interpersonal practice interventions and those which result from poverty, discrimination and disenfranchisement and require systemic as well as individual interventions.

Promotion and Prevention are addressed through identification of ways to provide early intervention, guidance and advocacy within systems, methods of preventing or mitigating later problems in complicated grief response, and through discussion of intervention theories and health care and social policies which support adaptive responses to grieving that enhance later adjustment.

Behavioral and Social Sciences Research informs the course, drawing especially on current research in psychological and neurophysiological understanding of attachment and grief reactions, and treatments for complicated grief emphasizing integrated evidenced-based treatments that can be effectively utilized by social workers, and advance resiliency/coping/adaptation.

COURSE RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES:

Social work ethics and values will be addressed within the course as they pertain to issues related to working with clients and colleagues. The NASW Code of Ethics will be used to give students direction about these ethical issues. In particular, this course will focus on client issues, such as confidentiality, privacy, rights and prerogatives of clients, the client's best interest, proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination. Issues specific to complicated grief that will be given special attention will include variations in treatment planning based on individual's needs and dysfunction, therapist ethical decision making, as well as the impact of the therapist's values and reactions to complicated grief behavior and adjustment difficulties. In addition, issues that arise when working with colleagues, such as referral, consultation, dispute resolution, and mediation will be discussed. This course will emphasize treatment of complicated within the context of Social Work ethics and values.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Good attendance and class participation
2. Reading: Articles and book chapters under “Assigned Readings” at the ctools website.
3. Completion of take home quiz.
4. Final in-class case write-up, emphasizing skill in assessment, evaluation, differential diagnosis, and design of treatment for complicated grief and mourning.

Grading: Grade will be satisfactory or unsatisfactory for the course.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Students requesting an accommodation for a disability, are encouraged to contact instructor at earliest convenience. Many aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate participation and progress throughout the course. Resources are available (i.e. services for students with disabilities, adaptive technology computing site, etc.) to make learning more effective. To the extent permitted by law, the information will be treated as private and confidential.

Religious Observances:

Please notify instructor if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment: Read assigned readings at ctools site

Due: At second class: Take home quiz on ‘Understanding, assessing and treating complicated grief and mourning.’

Due: At end of LAST class: The in class worksheet on case write-up, emphasizing skill in assessment, evaluation, differential diagnosis, and design of treatment

REQUIRED READINGS, AT CTOOLS SITE:

Worden, Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, chapters 4 and 6
 Rando, Grief, Dying, and Death, chapters 5 and 10
 Wofelt, Companioning the Bereaved
 Shapiro, Grief as a Family Process, chapters 5,6,7,8,9,11 {choose 2}
 Siegel, Parenting from the Inside Out, chapters 5 and 6
 Yalom, Staring at the Sun, chapters 2 and 3

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES AND TEXTS:

Aranda, S. & Milne, D. (2000). *Guidelines for the assessment of bereavement risk in family members of people receiving palliative care*. Melbourne: Centre for Palliative Care.

Carmichael, M. (2005). Bereavement assessment in palliative care: Identifying those 'At Risk.' *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplancy*, 8(2), 21-25.

Rando, T. (2000). *Clinical dimensions of anticipatory mourning: Theory and practice in working with the dying, their loves ones, and their caregivers*. IL: Research Press.

Tomarken A., Holland J., Schachter S., et. al (2008). Factors of complicated grief pre-death in caregivers of cancer patients. *Psychooncology*, 17(2), 105-111.

Worden, William. (2002). *Grief counseling and grief therapy*. Springer Publishing.

Siegel, D. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. NY: Bantam.