

2021 PROGRAM - LIVING WITH GRIEF SINCE COVID-19



DESCRIPTION:

The coronavirus pandemic has contributed to an unprecedented level of loss since March 2020. Non-death losses as well as deaths both due to and unrelated to COVID-19 have shattered the assumptive world, the view that the world is reasonably safe, benevolent, and predictable, and have created a sense of collective trauma and grief. As of mid-January 2021 over 400,000+ people have died in the U.S. due to COVID-19 (CDC) and the number continues to rise. A recent study has found that approximately nine people are impacted by a single COVID-19 death (Verdery, 2020). Combined with other causes of death (which have also increased during this period) and mounting non-death losses such as isolation, employment, routine, and sense of safety, those experiencing grief in the U.S. alone is conservatively in the millions.

Through an expert panel discussion and live and recorded interviews, Living with Grief Since COVID-19, will help professionals effectively respond to the onslaught of pandemic-related grief and bereavement needs in their communities and equip them with tools to support counseling, treatment, stabilization, and posttraumatic growth. Acknowledging that healthcare and grief professionals are coping with their own losses and the exposure to trauma related to the pandemic, this program will address ways to empower professionals to employ self-care techniques and suggest ways that employers can help. Finally, recognition of the grief and bereavement challenges the pandemic has posed will enable professionals to better support those who need help with their grief, reflect upon and safeguard their own mental health and wellbeing, and identify opportunities for improvement in grief support.

+Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). CDC COVID data tracker (maps, charts, and data provided by the CDC). Retrieved Jan. 21, 2021 from https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the multiple types of death and non-death loss people may have experienced throughout the pandemic and how these losses may contribute to disenfranchised grief and/or cumulative loss.
2. List the numerous factors of the pandemic that may complicate grief reactions and interventive strategies to support those grieving a loss at this time.
3. Explain the added stressors COVID-19 has placed on healthcare and bereavement professionals and paraprofessionals and recommend personal and organizational strategies for self-care.
4. Outline the opportunities and challenges presented by providing grief support virtually.
5. Discuss how the hospice team approach and community-based care may inform positive changes to health delivery and grief support moving forward.
6. Describe the need for improved and expanded professional grief training for counselors and mental health professionals in supporting those with complicated grief.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

To view this online program, you will need a computer and screen, reliable internet access, and speakers. The program video link is through Vimeo.

PROGRAM DETAILS

This presentation features experienced professionals offering their own expertise on the topic. On the screen, you will see the slide presentation and will be able to hear the experts talking and presenting.

The program is mainly for professionals already working in the field, but is practical for all levels of education – entry level, intermediate or advanced. Target audience includes health care clinicians, social service clinicians and others working in the hospice, palliative care, counseling, hospital, nursing home, funeral home or faith community environments. The program is 2 hours in length and there are 2 hours of CE available for wide variety of professional boards (no fee for CE). The On Demand program is available to watch until March 1, 2022.

MODERATOR

Frank Sesno, is Director of Strategic Initiatives, The George Washington University School of Media & Public Affairs, a former anchor for CNN, and a longtime moderator of the *Living with Grief*® program. He is an Emmy-award winning journalist and creator of PlanetForward.org, a user-driven web and television project that highlights innovations in sustainability, and he is the author of Ask More: The Power of Questions to Open Doors, Uncover Solutions and Spark Change.

EXPERT PANELISTS

Kenneth J. Doka, PhD, MDiv, is Senior Bereavement Consultant to Hospice Foundation of America (HFA) and the recipient of the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). A prolific author and editor, Dr. Doka serves as editor of HFA's *Living with Grief*® book series, its *Journeys* newsletter, and numerous other books and publications. He has been a panelist on HFA's *Living with Grief*® program for 28 years. Dr. Doka is a past president of ADEC, a former board member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement, and an Advisory Board member to the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). He is the recipient of The International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement's prestigious Herman Feifel Award and ADEC's Award for Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Death Education. In 2006, he was grandfathered in as a Mental Health Counselor under New York's first state licensure of counselors. Dr. Doka is an ordained Lutheran minister.

Katherine P. Supiano, PhD, LCSW, F-GSA, FT, APHSW-C, is an Associate Professor in the College of Nursing, and the director of Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program at the University of Utah College of Nursing. She teaches Interdisciplinary Approaches to Palliative Care for graduate students in Pharmacy, Social Work and Nursing, Geriatric Care Management and in the Interprofessional Education Program. Dr. Supiano's research is in clinical interventions in complicated grief, suicide survivorship and prison hospice. She has been a practicing clinical social worker and psychotherapist for over 30 years. Her clinical practice has included care of older adults with depression and multiple chronic health concerns, family therapy, end-of life care, and bereavement care. Dr. Supiano is a Fellow in the Gerontological Society of America, a Fellow of Thanatology, and a founding member of the Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network. She received her PhD in Social Work at the University of Utah as a John A. Hartford Foundation Doctoral Fellow.

Beverly Wallace, MDiv, PhD, is currently the associate professor of Congregational and Community Care at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. Dr. Wallace has authored several articles and book chapters including *Narratives of Grieving African Americans About Racism in the Lives of Deceased Family Members*; *A Womanist Legacy of Trauma, Grief, and Loss: Reframing the Notion of the Strong Black Woman Icon*; *Hush No More: Constructing an African American Lutheran Womanist Ethic*; and is the co-author (with Paul Rosenblatt) of *African American Grief*. Her current research agenda includes understanding community trauma and end-of-life decisions among older African Americans. She is also in the process in writing her second book, *African American Grief – Revisited*.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Segment 1: Loss and Grief in COVID-19 (1 hour)

- I. Introduction (Brief history/update on COVID-19)
- II. Types of Losses Experienced (20 mins)
 - A. Deaths by COVID
 - a. Unknown disease, treatments
 - b. Often in hospital, alone
 - B. Non-COVID Deaths
 - a. Higher than normal number of deaths from other causes
 - b. May be disenfranchised
 - C. Non-Death Losses
 - a. Financial losses
 - b. Loss of routine
 - c. Significant events - graduations, weddings, funerals, etc
 - d. "Long haulers" – loss of previous level of health
 - D. Medical Staff
 - a. Moral Distress – care rationing, beyond scope of training/practice
 - b. Repetitive deaths/trauma
 - c. Nursing homes –
 - i. High number of deaths/trauma
 - ii. concerns about bringing disease to patients and to their families
 - d. Turnover rates - number of nurses/staff leaving the field
- III. Grief: Complicating Factors (40 mins)
 - A. Loss of an Assumptive World
 - a. Loss of safety predictable nature of world.
 - b. isolation
 - B. Sudden, Unexpected, and Unpredictable Deaths
 - a. Impact on family, community
 - b. Impact on medical staff and others working at health care facilities
 - C. Multiple and Cumulative Loss
 - a. Numbing effect of numerous losses
 - b. Spread of disease through families – survivor guilt?
 - D. Quarantines and Restrictions on Visits
 - a. Isolation
 - b. Fear of spreading to vulnerable vs. decline due to isolation
 - E. Limitations on Rituals
 - a. Postponed grief reactions
 - b. Support limitations due to lack of rituals
 - c. Delays may lead to no rituals at all
 - F. Racial/Economic Disparities
 - a. Historical distrust
 - b. Minorities more likely to be essential workers; less likely to be able to work from home
 - c. Larger families in smaller spaces
 - d. Access issues for rural communities – clean water, distance to drs/hospitals

Segment 2: The Coming Pandemic of Complicated Grief (1 hour)

- IV. Assessment tools
 - A. Neimeyer COVID anxiety scales
 - B. Complicated Grief/Prolonged Grief Disorder+ Indicators (Shear, Columbia)
- V. Interventive Strategies (40 mins)
 - A. Vaccines: The Issue of “If onlys”
 - a. Reluctance/hesitation in underserved communities
 - b. length of roll out – issues of access, equity, justice
 - c. We’ve been here before – lessons from other treatments/vaccine advancements
 - d. Role of faith communities and chaplains
 - e. Healthcare workers as role models and educators
 - B. Telemedicine and Virtual Support Groups
 - a. Pros – increased reach, access for more people
 - b. Cons - less personal, tactile, intimate
 - C. Strategies for Rituals
 - a. Implications of delaying rituals
 - D. The Role of Hospice
 - a. Model of care as asset – team approach, community bonds
 - b. Compassionate Communities
 - E. Professional Self-Care
 - a. Increased need for professionally trained grief staff
- VI. Conclusion: The Coming Pandemic of Complicated Grief (20 mins)
 - A. Challenges
 - B. Opportunities
 - a. Possible change in models of delivery – wider reach, team approach
 - b. expansion of grief training and education

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Planners (Panelists and Review Committee Members) disclose no conflict of interest relative to this educational activity.

FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR ADDRESSING GRIEVANCES

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