
Preventive Interventions with Adults I

unresolved grief

Preventing unresolved grief

Unresolved Grief

- Background: traumatic bereavement can lead to severe mental health issues
 - apathy
 - weight changes
 - sleep disturbance
 - concentration problems
 - intrusive thoughts and dreams
 - hypervigilance



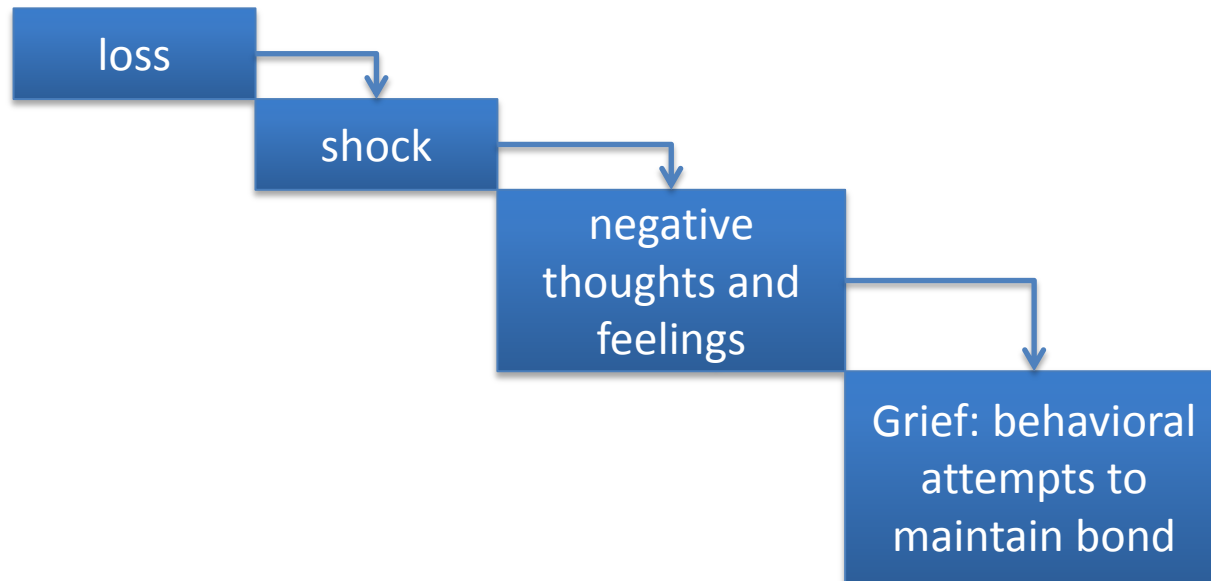
Preventing unresolved grief: Etiology

Unresolved Grief

- Mechanisms (hypothetical)
 - Bereavement: Need for redefinition of identity, roles, relationships
 - Redefinition may be disrupted or complicated by traumatic nature of the event
 - people feel overwhelmed
 - leads to withdrawal, interrupts relationships
 - inefficient social support and coping skills aggravate process
 - results: social maladjustment
 - >> substance use, suicide (20% of > 65), other psychiatric comorbidities
 - prevention important, as rapid intervention is required

Preventing unresolved grief: Etiology

Unresolved Grief



- similar features, but distinct from anxiety and depression
- form of separation anxiety
- 14% - 64% of bereaved adults, “normal” mourning 4-6 months
- peak at 6m, remains >25 months

Preventing unresolved grief: Etiology

Unresolved Grief

- Vulnerabilities, risk and protective factors
 - age
 - gender (men more easily isolated, denial, suicidal; women stronger emotional response; trauma response at 6m > cancer, heart disease)
 - distress: depression, anxious-avoidant attachment
 - social support
 - coping skills, emotion regulation
 - reappraisal, problem-focused decision making, spiritual beliefs, positive reframing,

Preventing unresolved grief: relevant factors

Unresolved Grief

given this knowledge: what are the implications?

1. easy to identify
2. act fast
3. differential interventions (adjust; we can't change age or sex...)
4. target risk and protective factors

Preventing unresolved grief: universal interventions

Unresolved Grief

- there are no universal interventions
 - reason: people suffering from UG often don't seek help
 - grief seen as normal, according to cultural norms and beliefs
- possible universal intervention (not evaluated)
 - death education at the school level, including parents
 - group sharing
 - encouraging dialogue
 - books as mediators

Preventing unresolved grief: selective interventions

Unresolved Grief

- selection: can we identify complicated grievers?
- outreach to individuals or families, with continuous assessment
 - being present despite of initial rejection
 - “mundane” forms of support: grocery shopping, helping with funeral preparations etc.
- family care, participation in the final stage
- group therapy
 - working through the loss, emotion regulation training, cognitive reframing, social contact?

Preventing unresolved grief: indicated interventions

Unresolved Grief

- resolving trauma
 - tackle intrusive thoughts, nightmares
 - expressive writing
- family prevention
 - encourage collective grief through rituals
- self help groups
 - safe place to mourn
 - understanding
 - safe place to learn and develop coping skills
 - creates a sense of social integration, social support
- Only professional interventions are well evaluated; they seem to work, particularly if intervention is tailored to the griever's coping style

Self-help example (christian self-help group)

Family oriented prevention, targeting physicians
as mediators
