

This grief isn't normal
...or is it?
Shifting our paradigm

Wes Sedlacek, MDiv, BCC



Learning Objectives

- To apply a new perspective to grief, specifically that which was caused by the pandemic
- To increase understanding of the concept of disenfranchised grief
- To consider options for carrying grief forward

Differing paradigms

- 2nd Century – Geocentric System (Ptolemy)
- 16th Century – Heliocentric System (Copernicus)
- Late 16th Century – Geoheliocentric System (Brahe)

(Harstad, 2023)

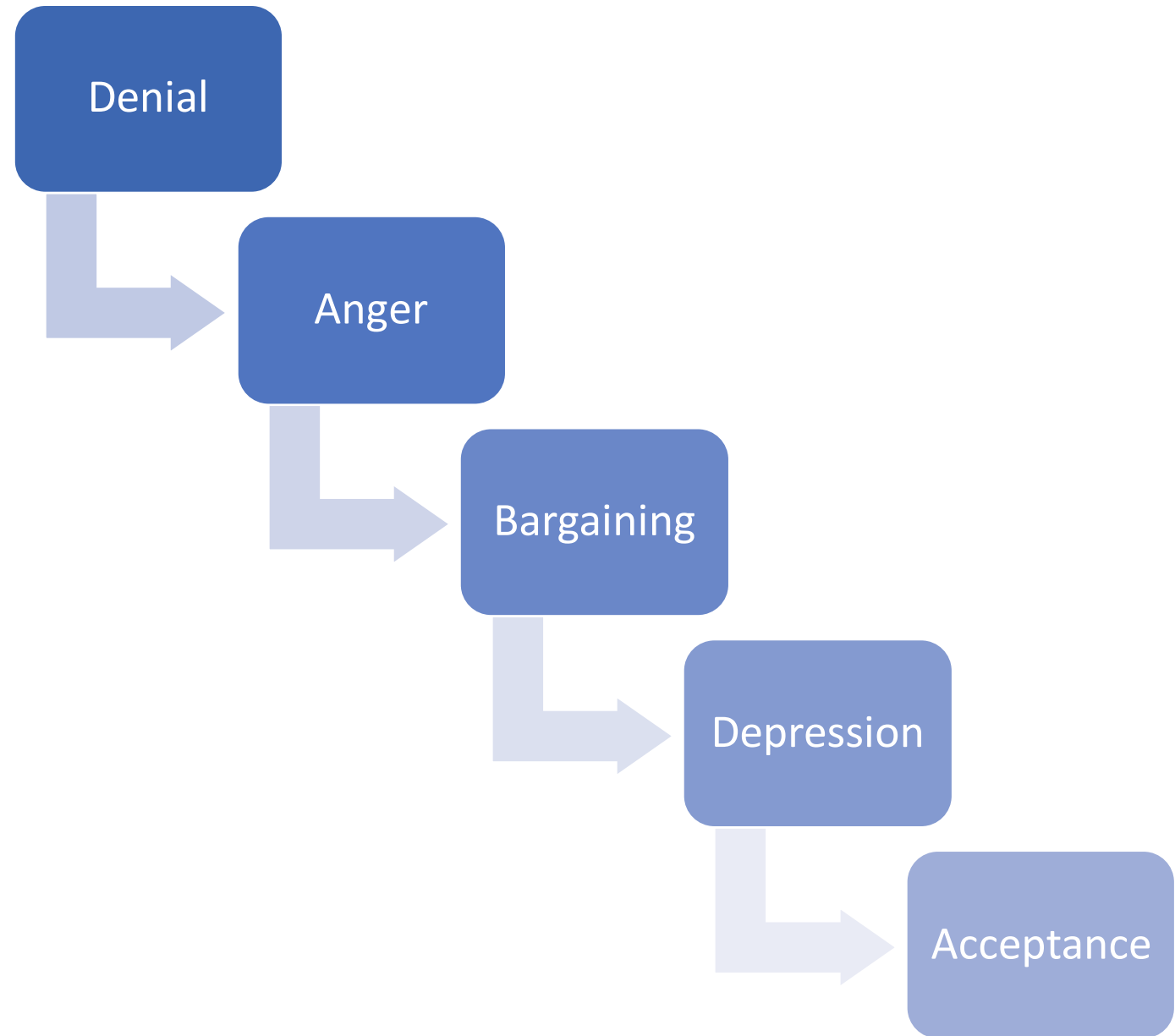




Grief

Stages of Grief

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross



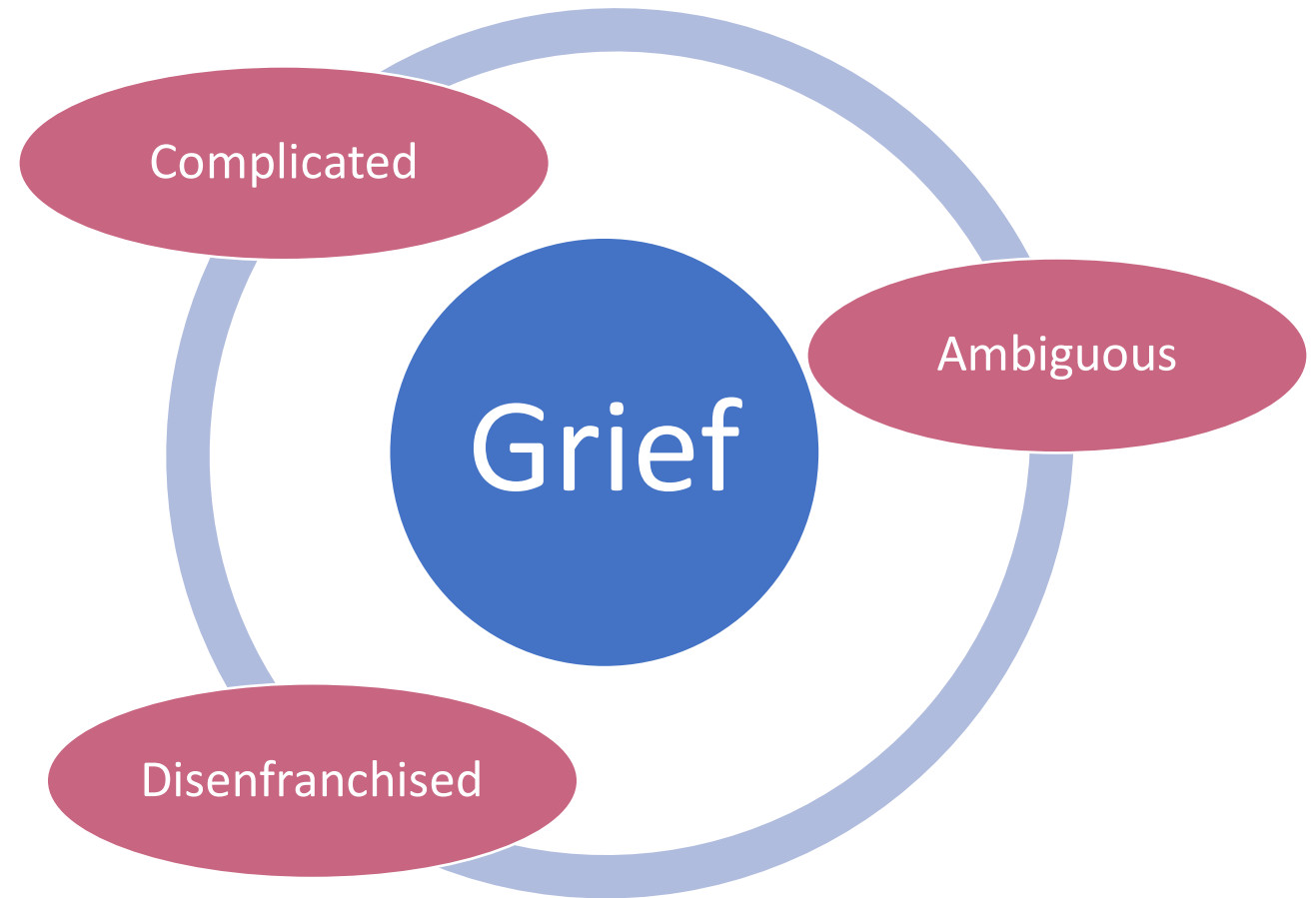
More recent understanding of grief



More recent understanding of grief



More recent
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Disenfranchised Grief

Kenneth Doka

- The relationship isn't acknowledged
- The loss isn't recognized
- The griever is not acknowledged
- There is stigma associated
- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

Disenfranchised Grief

Kenneth Doka

“The concept of disenfranchised grief recognises [sic] that societies have sets of norms – in effect, ‘grieving rules’ – that attempt to specify who, when, where, how, how long and for whom people should grieve.”

(Hall, 2011)

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Disenfranchised pandemic grief

Disenfranchised pandemic grief

The relationship isn't
acknowledged



Disenfranchised pandemic grief

The loss isn't recognized



Disenfranchised pandemic grief

The griever isn't acknowledged



Disenfranchised pandemic grief

There is stigma associated



Disenfranchised pandemic grief

The grief process doesn't fit the
norms of society



Disenfranchised



“Normal”

Disenfranchised



“Normal”

Disenfranchised Grief

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An RT's Grief

- The relationship isn't acknowledged
- The loss isn't recognized
- The griever is not acknowledged
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- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

An RT's Grief

- Legitimize your patient relationships
- The loss isn't recognized
- The griever is not acknowledged
- There is stigma associated
- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

An RT's Grief

- Legitimize your patient relationships
- Note that it's not just death
- The griever is not acknowledged
- There is stigma associated
- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

An RT's Grief

- Legitimize your patient relationships
- Note that it's not just death
- Claim your right to grieve
- There is stigma associated
- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

An RT's Grief

- Legitimize your patient relationships
- Note that it's not just death
- Claim your right to grieve
- Don't be embarrassed to feel
- The grief process doesn't fit the norms of society

An RT's Grief

- Legitimize your patient relationships
- Note that it's not just death
- Claim your right to grieve
- Don't be embarrassed to feel
- Change the paradigm on grief

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Moving forward

Moving forward



Integration is essential

- Loss often creates a disruption in our assumptions or beliefs about the world
- Usually, we either assimilate the loss into our understanding or adjust our understanding to accommodate. Sometimes it involves both.
- “Inability to find meaning and, therefore, effectively integrate the loss into one’s view of the world is said to lead to more intense and lasting symptoms of grief...”

(Flesner, 2013)

Reconnecting

- Be patient with yourself and co-workers, recognizing this time as transient
- Share experiences with colleagues to reduce feelings of isolation and dispel misconceptions (reality check)
- Share thoughts and feelings more than distressing details
- Talk to your supervisor, healthcare provider, or chaplains if you still feel overwhelmed

(Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress)

Making meaning

- Connect with something that transcends the pain (spirituality)
- Accept that some existential questions will never be answered
- Practice acts that have symbolic meaning to increase a sense of control

(Flesner, 2013)

Making meaning

- Focus on what is significant in life now
 - Discover resilience
 - Possible benefits
 - Opportunities for self-development
- Honor how the loss has impacted your life-story

(Flesner, 2013)

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Stories or Self-Reflection

Consider if

- You think differently about things
- You give more value to others who are important
- You are more sensitive to the fragility of life
- You have renegotiated your perspectives of a higher power
- You think about or understand life and death in a new way

(Flesner, 2013)

If your answer is
yes to any of
these, perhaps
your paradigm
about life and
death has
shifted

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So, too, can the grief paradigm shift.

Your grief is normal, even if it falls into
an “other” category.

It’s still your grief. And it’s legit.

Thank you for all that you do!

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