

Normative and Prolonged Grief Disorder: Proven and Effective Interventions to Help Your Clients Process Grief and Loss

Mental health and healthcare professionals are faced with the often misunderstood and misdiagnosed symptoms of normative and prolonged grief. Formal education rarely, if ever, provides extensive enough training to accurately identify and treat those who are grieving. Unfortunately, grieving clients are diagnosed incorrectly because symptoms can mimic normative or prolonged grief. The grieving process is often pathologized, or misdiagnosed, resulting in potential exacerbation of the presenting issues because inappropriate interventions are utilized. As a result, those who are grieving are often inadvertently disenfranchised by providers, which can make the professional support they sought to reconstruct their previously shattered identities and worldviews ineffective, and even, at times, exacerbate other mental health difficulties. It is essential to be versed in identifying grief-related constructs that may underlie, or even cause, mental health and behavior associated problems.

This presentation aims to provide current, research-based information on the grieving process, clarify misconceptions of outdated theories, and differentiate between normative and prolonged grief. It also examines the changes in conceptualization, differential diagnosing, and effective, clinically proven interventions that may be utilized with grieving individuals and families. Attendees will leave with an improved clinical skill set they can immediately apply to identify and treat their clients.

Target Audience

Psychologists Social Workers Counselors
Therapists Psychiatrists Nurses
Course level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Distinguish between "normative" and "prolonged" bereavement
 - Categorize the five types of disenfranchised losses
 - Compare the outdated stage model to modern theories of bereavement processes
 - Examine changes to the DSM-5-TR as it relates to normative and prolonged bereavement
 - Construct effective differential diagnoses to inform appropriate interventions

Seminar Schedule

Begin 10AM EST and end 5:00 PM, with 15 minute breaks at 11:30 and 3:30, and a half hour lunch break at 1PM

Outline

10:00-11:30AM EST

Definitions

- Normative versus prolonged grief
- Disenfranchised grief

Assessment of indicators and mediators that affect the grieving process

Risk factors and alerts for prolonged grief

Grief theories

- Older theories
- Modern theories

BREAK (11:30-11:45AM EST)

11:45-1:00PM EST

Cultural and spiritual considerations

DSM-5-TR and differential diagnosing

- a. Why the changes?
- Differential diagnosing from prolonged grief disorder, depression, PTSD, and adjustment disorders

LUNCH (1:00-1:30PM EST)

1:30 - 3:30PM EST

Assessment

- Gathering and organizing information

Treatment Planning

BREAK (3:30 - 3:45pm EST)

3:45-5:00PM EST

Interventions

- Dual Process Model of coping
- Narrative
- Music
- Groups
- Physiological
- Evidence-based, integratively informed interventions
- End 5 PM ET

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The Presenter

Dr. Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., FT is a licensed clinical psychologist, Fellow of Thanatology, founder and owner of The Center for Grief and Trauma Therapy. She often works as an adjunct professor and professional speaker, and especially enjoys training emerging mental health professionals. Dr. Zampitella is the host of her podcast, Phoenix Rising with Dr. Z. She focuses her clinical practice, research, course development, and teaching on bereavement studies, spirituality, nature-based therapy, and integrative psychology. She served as the chair for the Continuing Education Committee for several professional institutions and is an advisory board member of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). She is the former resident psychologist for Fox 5 News in San Diego, and often appeared on NBC News. She has been featured in Elle Magazine, BuzzFeed, The Huffington Post, New York Post, and several Delaware Magazines and newspapers. Dr. Zampitella happily lives with her husband, three bonus sons, and three cats in Delaware.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Phil Rich, LICSW, Daphne Fatter, Ph.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2025.

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