

Complicated Spiritual Grief: When Grief Becomes a Spiritual Crisis

For many grieving individuals, faith, religion, and spirituality offer solace and strength in the aftermath of loss. These spiritual frameworks often help people make sense of their grief and provide a foundation for healing. However, for some, the grieving process disrupts — or even severs — their connection to a higher power, spiritual identity, or religious community. This rupture can result in a secondary loss: the loss of spiritual support, meaning, and belonging, which may lead to a profound spiritual crisis. This form of suffering is known as Complicated Spiritual Grief (CSG) — a state in which the individual's spiritual or religious foundation is deeply impacted by loss. CSG can intensify the emotional pain of bereavement, especially for those who have previously drawn strength from spiritual or religious beliefs.

Clinicians are increasingly encountering spiritual and religious concerns in their therapeutic work with grieving clients. This workshop equips mental health professionals with the knowledge and tools to recognize the signs and impact of CSG. Participants will learn to assess the presence of spiritual distress, understand how CSG can influence the mourning process, and develop effective, spiritually sensitive treatment plans. By addressing all domains of the grieving client's experience — emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual — clinicians will be better prepared to support holistic healing in the face of loss.

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. Define complicated spiritual grief, spirituality, and religion
 2. Compare and contrast the definitions of grief, regret, and shame
 3. Explain the differences between religion and spirituality
 4. Explain how grief is a spiritual crisis
 5. Identify how CSG Can Affect the Griever

Seminar Schedule

The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

Outline

- Distinguishing Religion from Spirituality*
- Understand the key differences between religion and spirituality
 - Explore how each influences self-identity, values, and world-view
- II. Grief as a Spiritual Crisis*
- Examine how bereavement can challenge or disrupt a person's faith, beliefs, and spiritual orientation
- III. Grief as a Catalyst for Spiritual Growth*
- Understand how loss can initiate a personal search for meaning, purpose, and existential understanding
- IV. Defining Complicated Spiritual Grief (CSG)*
- Establish a working definition of CSG and its clinical relevance
- V. Experiencing and Expressing Complicated Spiritual Grief*
- Explore the emotional, cognitive, and spiritual impact of CSG on the griever
 - o Effects on personal connection to a higher power or spiritual meaning
 - o The role of religious or spiritual communities in exacerbating or alleviating grief
 - o How religious practices may be altered or abandoned in response to CSG
- VI. Supporting Clients in Spiritual and Religious Crisis*
- Introduction to the Inventory of Spiritual Grief 2.0 for assessment
 - Evidence-informed clinical interventions for navigating CSG in therapeutic settings

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Continuing Education Credit

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The Presenter

Christina Zampitella Psy.D., FT is a licensed clinical psychologist, Fellow of Thanatology, and 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., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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