

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presentation aims to provide current, research based information on the grieving process, clarify misconceptions of outdated theories, and differentiate between normative and prolonged grief.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- Compare the outdated stage model to modern theories of bereavement processes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

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

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

Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., FT is a licensed clinical psychologist, Fellow in Thanatology, and founder of the Center for Grief and Trauma Therapy. She serves as an adjunct professor and international professional speaker, with a particular passion for training and mentoring emerging mental health professionals. Dr. Zampitella is also the host of her podcast Phoenix Rising with Dr. Z.

Her clinical practice, research, course development, and teaching focus on bereavement studies, meaning reconstruction, nature-based therapy, and integrative psychology. She has served as Chair of the Continuing Education Committee for multiple professional organizations and is a faculty member at the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, where she holds certifications in grief therapy through meaning reconstruction as well as in non-death losses within the meaning reconstruction framework.

Dr. Zampitella previously served as the resident psychologist for Channel 5 News in San Diego and has appeared on NBC News in both California and Delaware. Her work has been featured in Elle Magazine, BuzzFeed, The Huffington Post, The New York Post, and several Delaware publications.

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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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