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Working with loss

- Looking after ourselves and other members of the team underpins the maintenance and development of our psychospiritual health.
- Bereavement care involves caring for others but it also demands personal vigilance as to our own skills and emotional/spiritual capacity to deal with patients and carers’ losses.
- In the drive to deliver personalized care nurses are encouraged to get to know patients and relatives from a holistic point of view.

Working with loss

- Listening is central to our understanding of what the patient and family are experiencing.
- Nurses grieve too is highlighted in an illuminating study by McIntyre (2002) that examined nursing support for families of dying patients.
"You get involved with the patient and involved with their relatives and you start getting to know them... And they get to know you... And it all becomes so painful and hard.

McIntyre, 2002, p. 113
Grief
A normal affective response to an overwhelming loss

Bereavement
The objective state of loss and grief as the emotions that accompany this loss
Factors that affect the process of grieving

- The urge to look back
- The urge to cry and search for what is lost
- The conflicting urge to look forward and discover what can be carried forward from the past.

Mourning
Includes the rituals and practices that help us grieve and represent observable expression of grief.
Models of Grief & Bereavement

Kubler-Ross (1969)

- Anger
- Denial
- Bargaining
- Acceptance
Worden (1991)

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Work through the pain of grief
- Adjust to life without the deceased
- Emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life

Stroebe (1998)

Loss-orientation
Restoration-orientation
Oscillation
Bowlby (1980)

- Numbness
- Yearning and searching
- Disorganizations and support
- Reorganization

Parkes (1986)

- Shock and alarm
- Searching
- Anger and guilt
- Gaining a new identity
Klass & Silverman (Klass et all 1997)

- Understanding of grief covers losses other than death
- It is normal for the bereaved to maintain a connection with the deceased that is not static
- The bereaved construct an inner representation of the deceased; the relationship diminishes but does not disappear.

Making Sense of the Loss Journey
The grieving process started while the patient was alive
- Sherwood et. al.
Psychological responses to loss and bereavement

► Emotional
  ▶ Depression
  ▶ Anxiety
  ▶ Hyper-vigilance
  ▶ Anger
  ▶ GUILT
  ▶ Loneliness

Psychological responses to loss and bereavement

► Cognitive
  ▶ lack of concentration and attention
  ▶ Pre-occupation
  ▶ Helplessness / hopelessness
  ▶ Feeling of distance / detachment
Psychological responses to loss and bereavement

- Behavioral
  - Irritability
  - Restlessness
  - Searching
  - Crying
  - Social withdrawal

Working alongside with those living with loss

Supporting those who face or have experienced loss presents one of the most challenging dimensions of palliative care.
Bereavement Care

- Care of the family
- Information giving and receiving
- Care of the deceased
- Supporting ritual and mourning customs
- Legal and medical interventions
- Future care and support

Assessing Bereavement

- It help us focus scarce resources on those who may need the help of health-care professionals
- Assessment may help prevent a plethora of physical, psychological, spiritual and social problems, which may persist well beyond the initial bereavement
Risk Factors

- Societal and Cultural context
- Personality
- Sexuality
- Gender differences
- Age
- Lack of social support
- Nature of relationship
- Financial
- Psychological Factors

Risk Factors

- Coexisting mental illness
- Alcohol / drug dependence
- Physical Factors
- Spiritual Factors
- Nature of dying and process of death
Supporting those living with loss

Social Support is critical
But not always readily available to all.
Good practice in supporting the bereaved

- Looking after yourself as you look after the needs of the bereaved
- High quality pain and symptom control in the run-up to the patients death
- Assessing risk and identifying current and future social support networks
- Referring on to other members of the multiprofessional team for more specialist support
- Good-quality information and communication at all points in the bereavement journey

Some Suggestions to Help Support the bereaved

- Listen and accept to person in a non-judgemental way.
- Demonstrate empathy with the persons position and challenges
- Tolerate and stay with the silences
- Stay in touch with your own feelings about death and dying
- Offer assurances based on the persons actions in the run-up to the death
Some Suggestions to Help Support the bereaved

- Encourage the person to be patient with themselves
- Don’t take anger personally
- Consider diversity / cultural differences
- Allow for coping startegies

Information

- It may be difficult to accept the loss and at times you may deny what has happened
- At times it may seem as if there is no point in going on and the intensity of your grief is overwhelming and difficult to get away from.
- You might experience sleep disturbance or periods when you feel very tearful and exhausted
Conclusions

- Supporting the bereaved is a vast topic and has been the subject of wide-ranging research by nurses...
- The nurse play a very important role in helping prepare those who are dying and also to help bereaved relatives navigate the difficult days ahead.
- Hope can exist in the knowledge that creativity and new beginnings may be emerging feature of life if the person is able to successfully pass through the mourning process.

Dead Man's Switch

Why?
Bad things happen. Sometimes, they happen to you. If something does happen, you might wish there was something you had told the people around you. How you feel, what you regret, where the money is slashed. For this, you need a dead man's switch.

How?
This is how this works. You write a few e-mails and choose the recipients. These emails are stored securely, so you can be sure that no-one except the intended recipient will ever read them. Your switch will email you every so often, asking you to show that you are fine by clicking a link. If something were to happen... to you, your switch would then send the emails you wrote to the recipients you specified. Sort of an “electronic will,” one could say.

When?
The emails are sent at certain intervals. By default, the switch will email you 30, 45, and 52 days after you last showed signs of life. If you don't respond to any of those emails, all your messages will be sent 60 days after your last check-in. Of course, you can have your switch postpone its activation (if, for example, you'll be away for some time) by telling it to not try to contact you for a specified period of time. The service will resume normally after however many days have passed. In the default example, if you specify a delay of 10 days, the emails will be sent after 40, 55, and 62 days, while your messages will be sent after 70 days.

How much?
Right now, you can add up to 2 emails with up to 2 recipients each. Upgrading your account to premium allows you to add more messages. It will also allow you to set custom messaging intervals so Dead Man's Switch will notify you as often or as rarely as you like.
Living with loss

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