

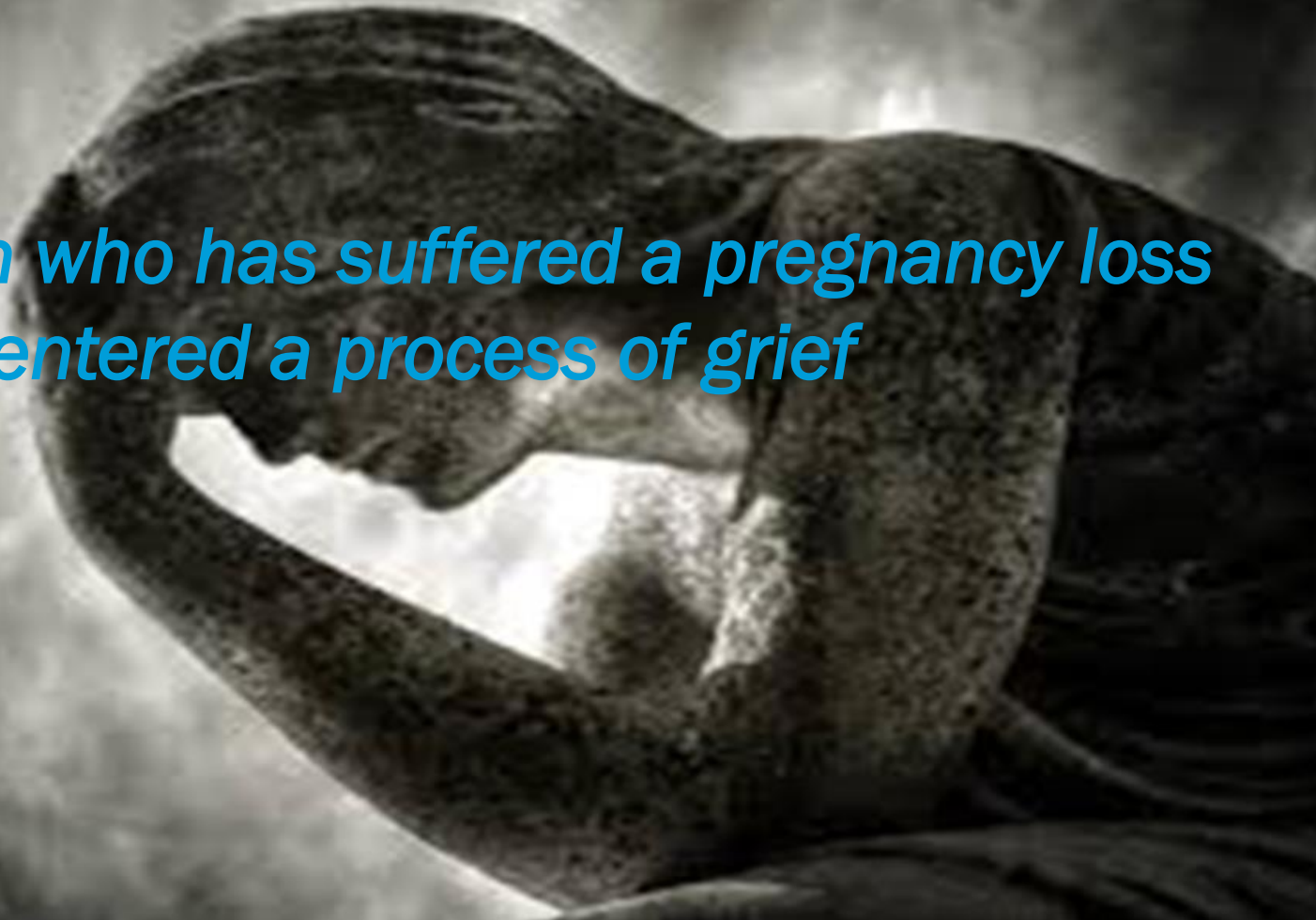
Pregnancy Loss: Working with the Grieving Patient

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Grieving After a Pregnancy Loss

A woman who has suffered a pregnancy loss has just entered a process of grief



A General Definition:

The United States National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) defines fetal death as the spontaneous intrauterine death of a fetus at any time during pregnancy.

Rough Statistics

It is estimated that in the United States, about 20 to 25 percent of ALL pregnancies end up in losses. This includes:

Molar pregnancies

Ectopic pregnancies

Miscarriages

Stillbirths



***The Concepts of Loss,
Grief, and Bereavement***

Loss, Grief and Bereavement

Loss - is the fact or process of losing something or someone.

Grief – refers to the set of emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioral/social responses to a loss.

Mourning - Is the set of outward manifestations of grief.

Funerals, rituals, cultural/religious beliefs and practices.

Bereavement - Is used to describe the entire process of grieving and mourning.

A Few Words On Grief

Grief is a normal reaction after a loss

It is a natural, non-pathological phenomenon

It is a healthy expression of the emotions

It is a necessary step for healing

It is a universal human experience

It occurs across cultures, gender, age, socioeconomic status, etc.

A Few Words On Grief (cont'd)

It is a very personal and highly individual experience

Each person grieves differently based on factors such as personality, coping style/strategies, religious beliefs, support system at time of loss, and/or level of attachment to their loved one.

A Few Words On Grief (cont'd)

Grief is also socially and culturally influenced

People approach and react to death according to their culture's interpretations of death and what happens after death

Private/quiet crying vs. public demonstrations of grief

Funerals, rituals, and ways to remember the dead are also culturally and socially defined

It is a process , therefore it takes time

Cannot be rushed

Symptoms of Grief After a Pregnancy Loss

EMOTIONAL:

- Sadness
- Emotional Numbness
- Anger
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness



Symptoms of Grief After a Pregnancy Loss (cont'd)



COGNITIVE:

- Shock and disbelief
- Confusion
- Inability to concentrate
- Preoccupation
- Self Doubt
- Auditory Hallucinations

Symptoms of Grief After a Pregnancy Loss (cont'd)

PHYSICAL:

- Lack of energy
- Lower immunity
- Oversensitivity to noise/light
- Changes in appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical aches or exacerbation of illnesses



Symptoms of Grief After a Pregnancy Loss (cont'd)

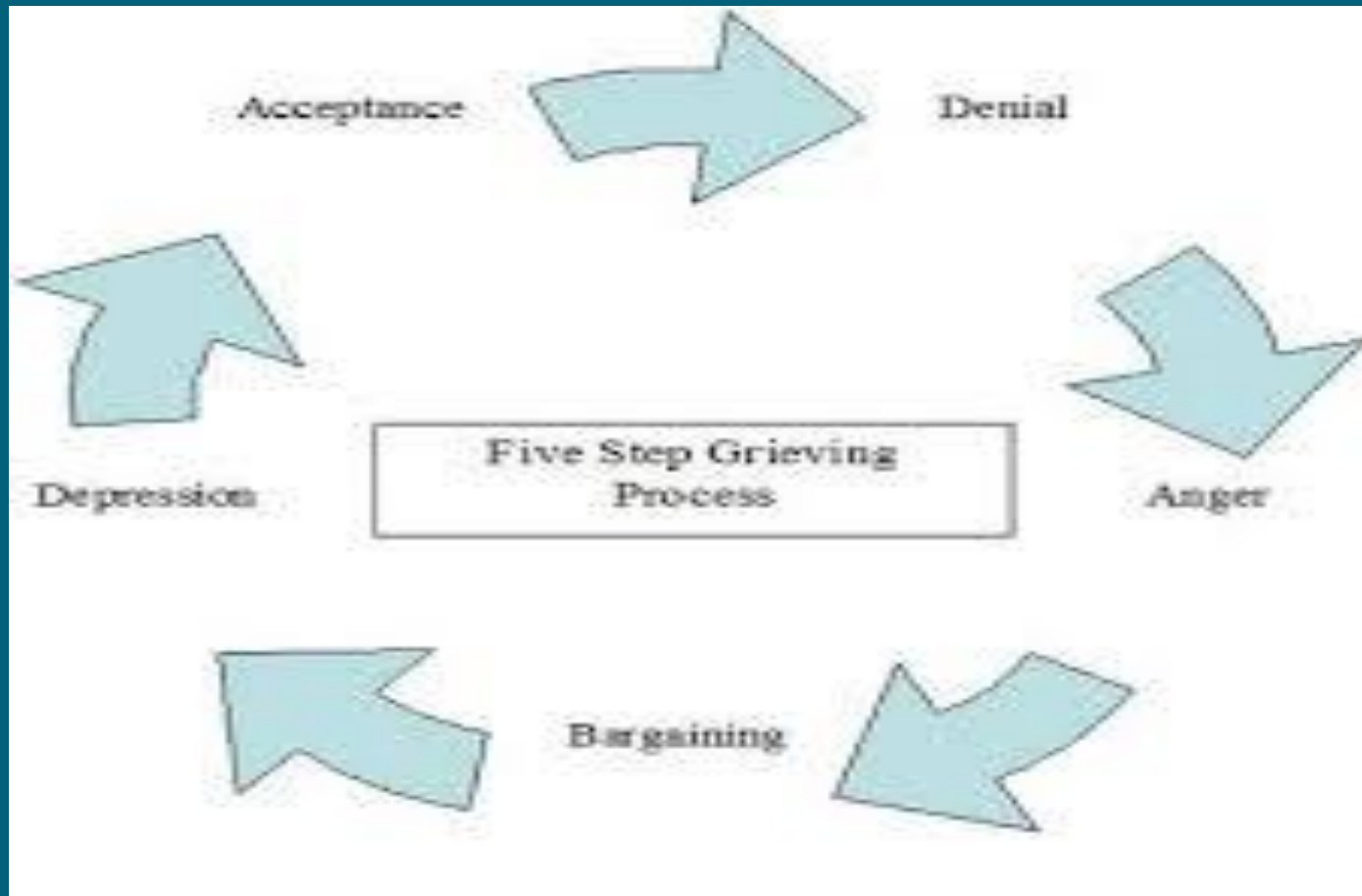


BEHAVIORAL / SOCIAL:

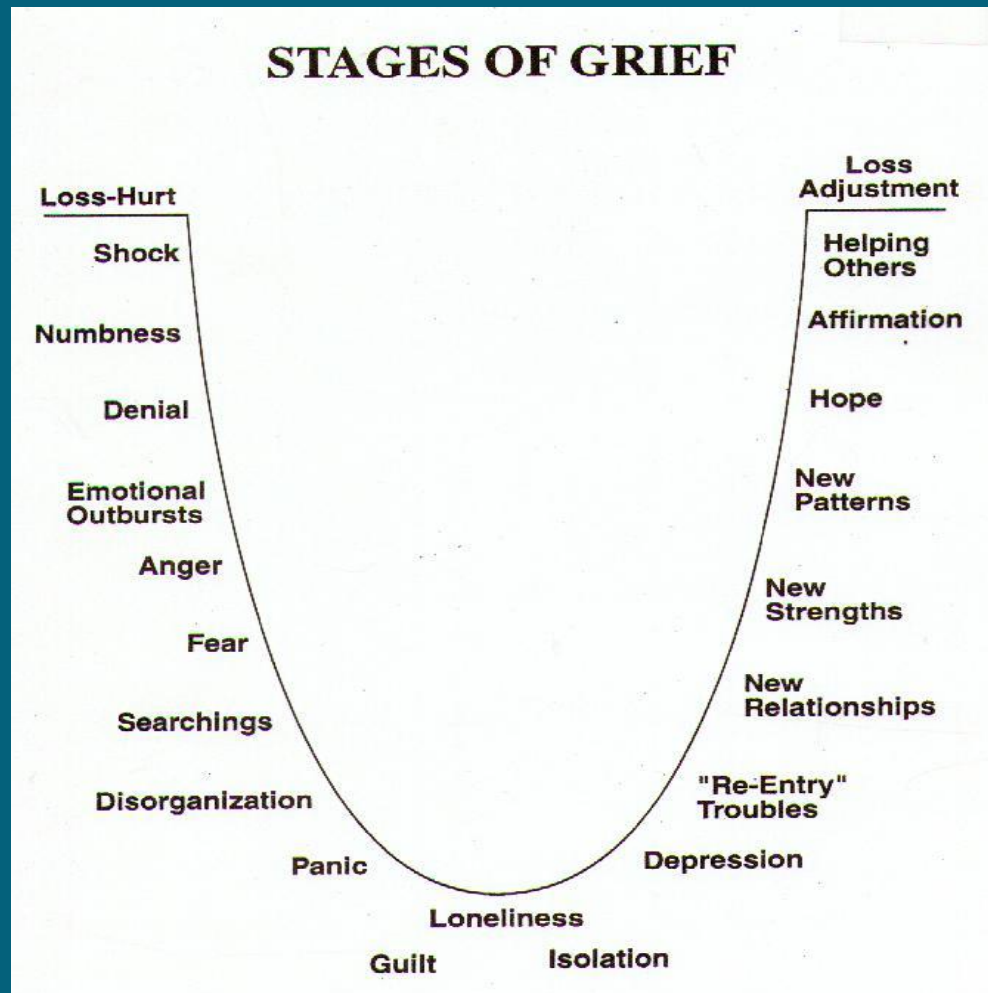
- Refusal to see/hold her baby's remains
- Absentmindedness
- Irritability
- Social withdrawal

The 5 Stages of Grief

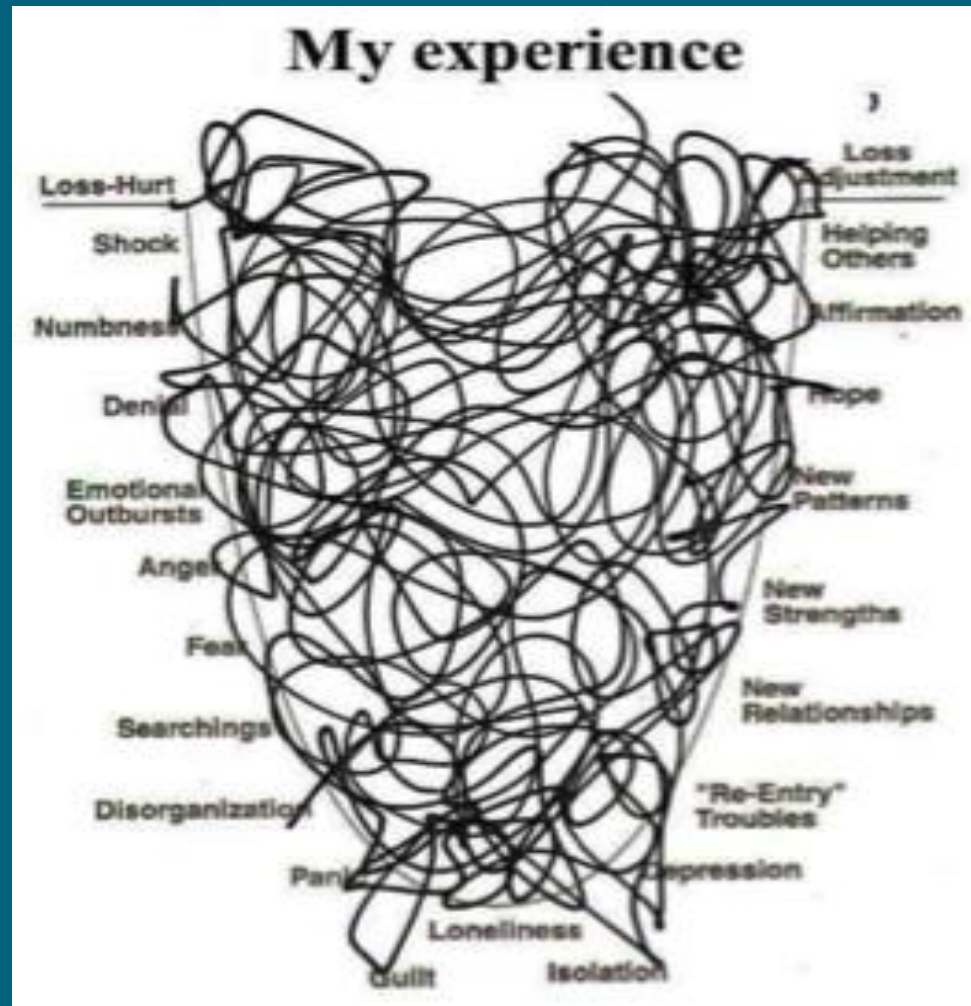
The Kübler-Ross Theory



Newer Versions



The Patient's Experience



What Can I Do to Help?

Be Aware Of:

- ***Word choice*** – Refer to the patient’s baby as “your baby.” Avoid using the terms fetus, specimen, it, or product of conception when talking to her
- ***Body Language*** - Facial expression, a smile goes a long way and connects you to the patient
- ***Speech*** – Tone of voice, volume, speech rate
- ***Behavior*** – Respect your patient’s space and privacy, be gentle and patient
- ***Listen and validate***
- ***Show genuine empathy and kindness***– These are universal features and need no words for interpretation.

What and What Not to Tell

Inappropriate

- I know exactly how you feel
- Everything happens for a reason
- He/she is in a better place
- God will give you more children or at least you have other kids.
- You'll feel better soon
- Life goes on

Appropriate

- I am sorry for your loss
- I can only imagine how you feel at this time
- This baby must have been very special for you
- I am here to help in any way I can
- Is there anything I can do for you at this time?

Resources

H A N D

Houston's Aid in Neonatal Death

P.O. Box 19823

Houston, TX. 77224-9823

(832) 752-1919

info@hand.net

Bo's Place

10050 Buffalo Speedway

Houston, TX. 77054

(713) 942-8339

info@bosplace.org

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