



How to Lead an Eight Week Therapeutic Support Group for Adult Suicide Survivors

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General Information

- Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death for all groups. Fourth leading cause of death for adolescents.
 - There are 32,000 suicide deaths per year in the US.
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Risk Factors

- Caucasian Male
 - Low levels of serotonin
 - Older adults are more likely to complete rather than attempt suicide
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Risk Factors (continued)

- Availability of a loaded hand gun increases the risk in the adolescent population.
 - Availability of any gun leads to an increased risk in the general population.
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Psychiatric History Risk for Suicide

- Most people who complete suicide have a psychiatric history. Few people with a psychiatric history attempt suicide.
 - About 30% of all completed suicides have a previous attempt.
 - Females are four times more likely to attempt suicide and males are three times more likely to complete.
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Risk for Suicide (continued)

Percentage breakdown by age of completed suicides that have a known or unknown psychiatric illness:

- 60% under the age of 15
- 90% ages 15 to 24
- 96% ages 24 to 60
- 60% over the age of 60

Overall, 90% of all completed suicides have a known or unknown psychiatric illness.

Continuum of Suicide

- Normal thoughts
 - Passive death wish
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Suicidal ideation with plan
 - Suicidal intent
 - Suicide gesture
 - Completed suicide
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Physical Manifestations of Grief

- Weakness
 - Appetite changes
 - Feeling of choking
 - Shortness of breath
 - Chest tightness
 - Dry mouth
 - GI disturbances
 - Fatigue
 - Exhaustion
 - Sleep continuity disturbance
 - Panic Attacks
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Cognitive Manifestations of Grief

- Preoccupation with images and the thoughts of the deceased
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Hallucinations
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Behavioral Manifestations of Grief

- Old life and patterns lose meaning
 - Disruptions of patterns of conduct
 - Inability to follow daily patterns
 - Disorganized
 - Restless
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Affective Manifestations of Grief

- Sadness, anger, anxiety, loneliness, and guilt
 - Symptoms of grief may meet criteria for a diagnosis of an affective disorder
 - Function vs. dysfunction
 - Very similar to an anxiety disorder
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Tasks of Grief

- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
 - William Worden
 - Therese Rando
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Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969)

- Denial and isolation

- Anger

- Bargaining

- Depression

- Acceptance

William Worden (1982)

- Accept the reality of the loss
 - Experience the pain of the loss
 - Readjust the environment
 - Reinvest emotional energy in other relationships
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Therese Rando (1993)

Six “Rs”, the process of mourning:

1. Recognize the loss
 2. React to the separation
 3. Recollect and Re-experience the deceased and the relationship
 4. Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased
 5. Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old
 6. Reinvest
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Outcome of Trauma

- Emotional roller coaster can eventually turn into a new equilibrium for functioning.
 - World view will forever be changed
 - Individuals may experience traumatic memories or grief spasms.
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Initial Reactions to a Suicide Death

- Shock
 - Problems with concentration, judgment, and memory
 - Denial
 - Fear
 - Helplessness
 - Anger
 - Guilt/Responsibility
 - Rejection/Abandonment
 - Need to gather more information
 - Nightmares
 - Physical reactions
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Healthy Coping Behaviors

- Talking about the life and death of the loved one
 - Visiting the grave
 - Crying
 - Wearing clothes of the deceased
 - Reading books
 - Journal
 - Looking at pictures/not looking at pictures
 - Support group
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Types of Grief

- Anticipatory grief
 - Acute grief
 - Complicated grief
 - Disenfranchised grief
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Factors Related to Traumatic Death

- Sudden and lack of anticipation
- Violent, mutilation, and destruction
- Preventability and/or randomness
- Multiple deaths
- Death of a child
- Survivor's personal encounter with death

(Rando, 1994)

Variables Influencing the Child's Grief

1. Causes and circumstances of the loss
 - Where and what the child is told
 - Opportunities to ask questions
 2. Family relationship after the loss
 - Changes in living situation
 - Changes in parenting
 3. Patterns of relationship within the family prior to the loss
 - Relationship between parents
 - Relationship with the child
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Maslow's "Basis Hierarchy of Human Needs"

- Basic needs/Survival needs
 - Safety and Security
 - Cognitive functioning (activities of daily living)
 - Love and Belongingness
 - Intellectual and Spiritual growth
 - Self Actualization
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We acknowledge with gratitude the Pennsylvania Legislature for its support of the STAR-Center and our outreach efforts.

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 - 23 slides including trailer
 - slides will be picked up in the Medical Media offices at McKee Place

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