

Self-reflection

- Think of an example, either involving yourself or someone you have worked with, of a time when someone struggled to manage grief.
 - How did grief impact you or them?
 - Were the coping mechanisms used beneficial or harmful? Why?
- At your institution, how would you handle a situation in which a colleague or trainee experienced significant loss and they were worried about their ability to process grief?
 - Are there specific resources you would offer them or educate about?
 - What coping strategies would you teach?

Helping Health Professionals Cope With Grief: The Next Steps After Saying Goodbye



Maj(s) Jamie Geringer, DO

CPT Lisa Townsend, MD

Col(s) Brian Neubauer, MD, MHPE, FACP

Uniformed Services University

Department of Medicine

No competing financial interests exist.

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Objectives

1. Define grief.
2. Describe how grief can impact one's self, trainees, and/or peers.
3. Identify and demonstrate beneficial coping mechanisms to help others process grief.
4. Employ a group debriefing session designed to address grief among colleagues.

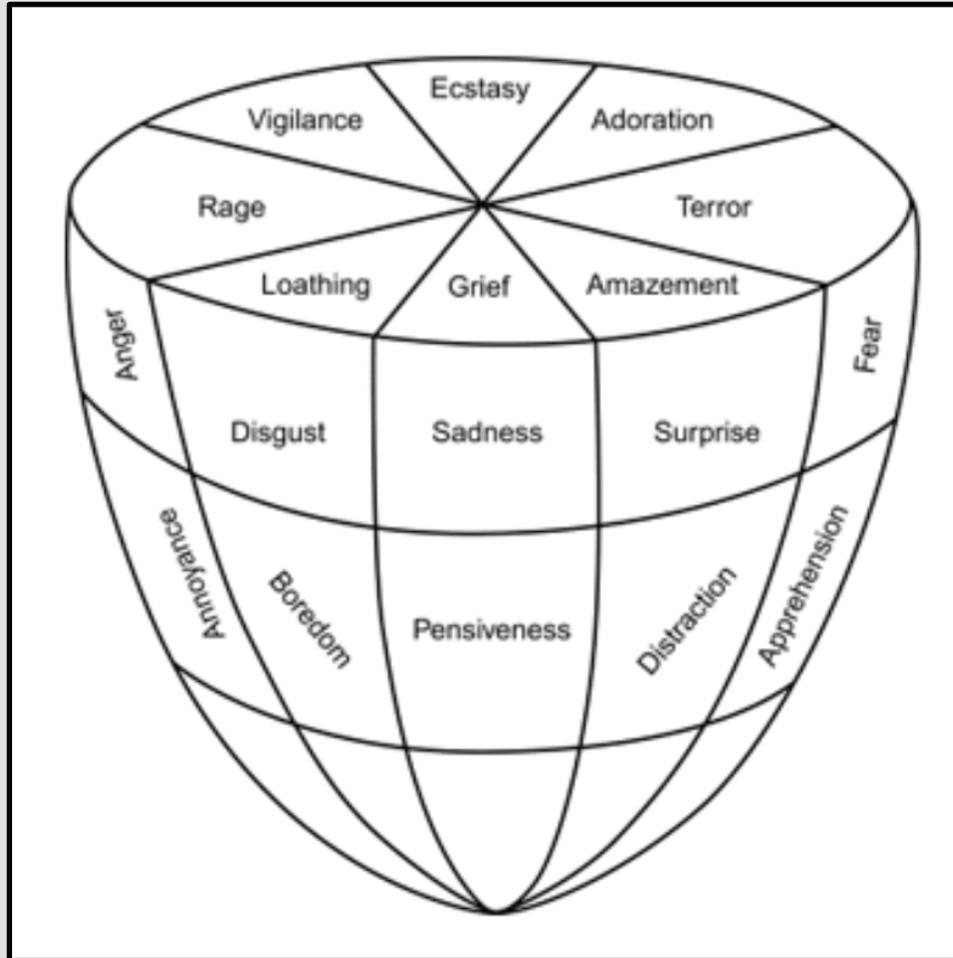
Definition of Grief

- Deep and poignant distress due to loss
- Non-linear
- Influenced by social factors:
 - Cultural background
 - Social class
 - Religious beliefs
 - Individual capacity to cope with stress

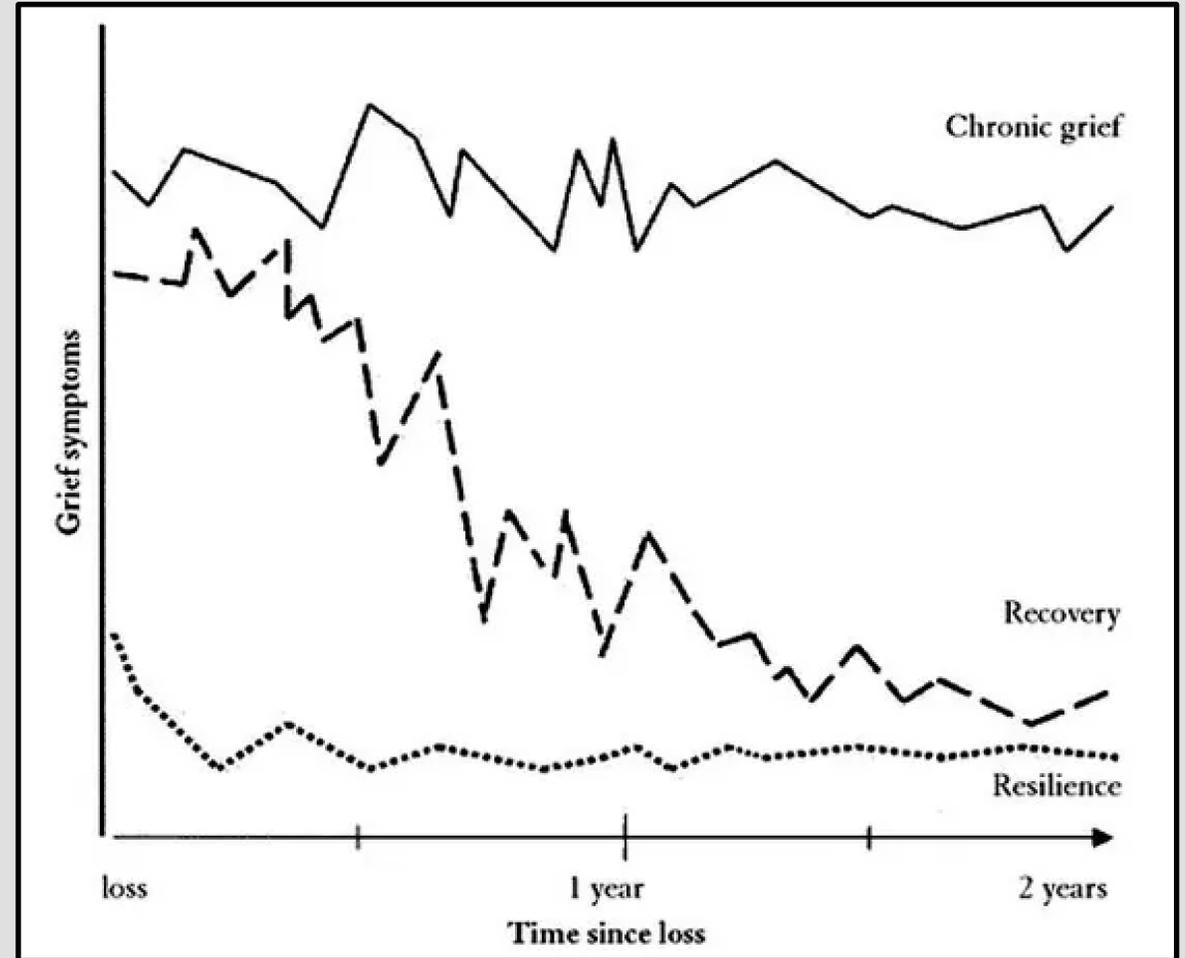


2022 The Pennsylvania State University

Modeling of Grief



Bota et. al. *IEEE Access*. 2019.



Bonanno et. al. *Clinical Psychology Review*. 2001.

Self-reflection

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The Impact of Unattended Grief on Healthcare Professionals

- Unattended healthcare professional grief can be high risk for job-related stress and burnout
- Inability to appropriately deal with grief was associated with
 - Inattentiveness, impatient, irritability, emotional exhaustion, and burnout
 - Change in treatment and care recommendations
 - Dissolution of good communication between patient and provider

Graneck et al. *Arch Int Med.* 2012

Sikstrom et al. *PLoS One.* 2019.

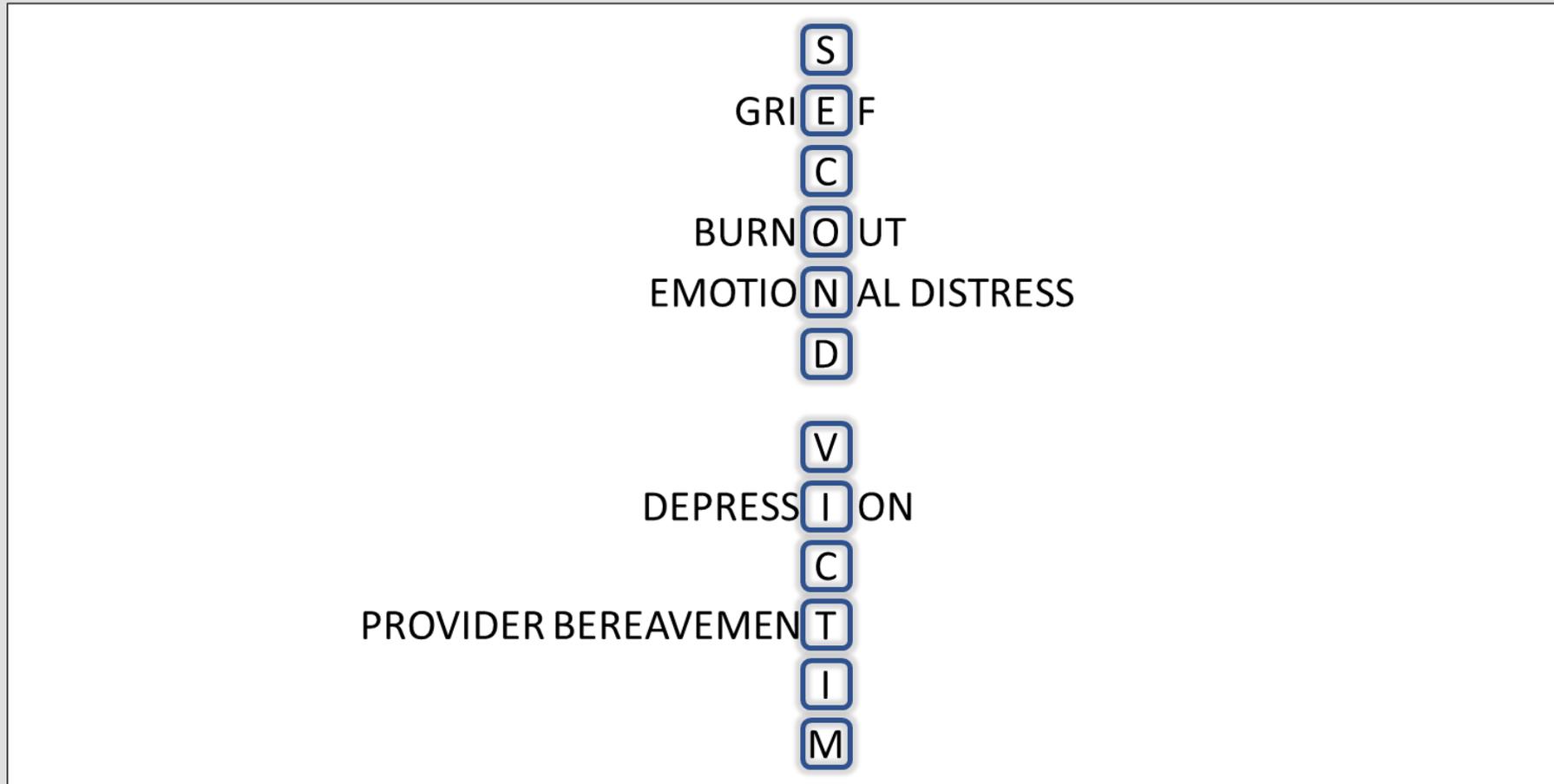
Zakaria et. al. *BMJ Open.* 2022..

The Grief of a Healthcare Professional- Second Victim

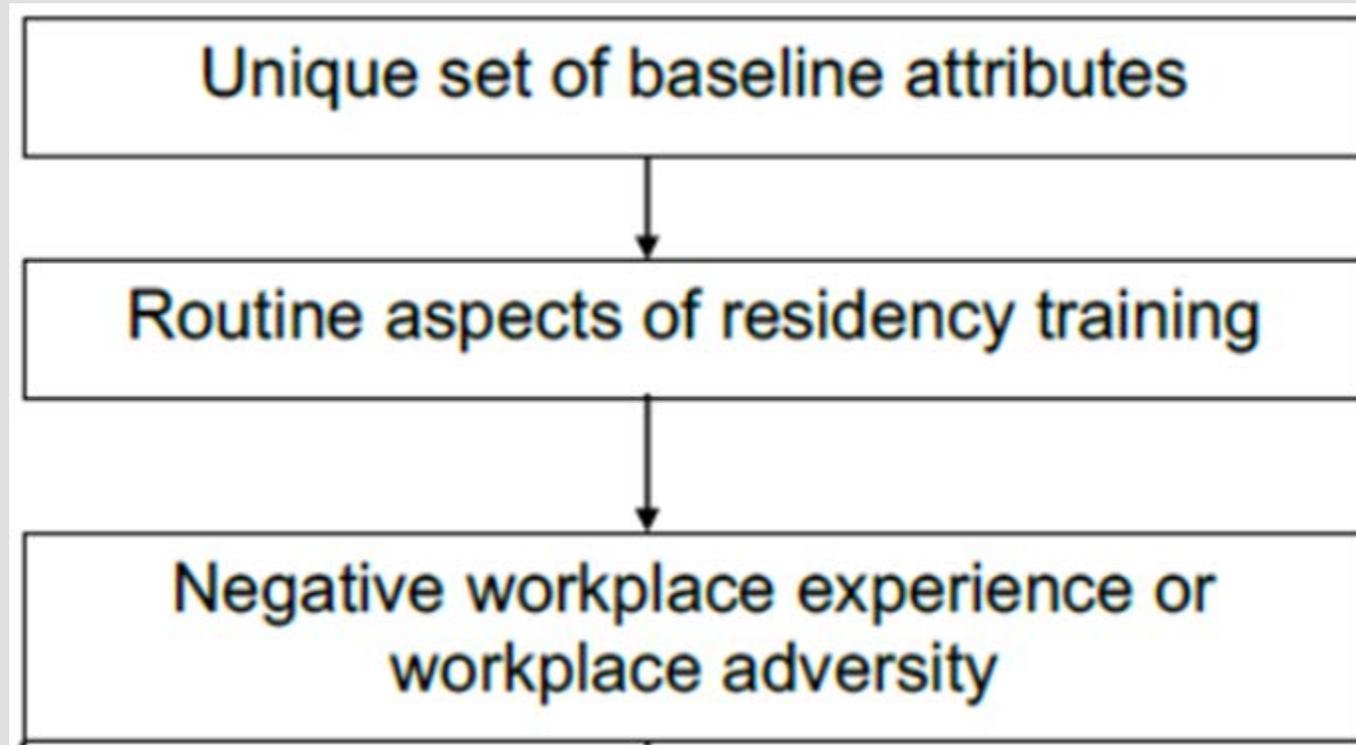
- Experiences with death occur during all stages of training and careers
- Coping is often associated with feelings of isolation

*A tension between emotional concern and professional detachment was pervasive among medical students undergoing their first experience of the death of a patient in their care. How this tension was negotiated depended on the patient's clinical circumstances, supervisor role-modelling and, **most importantly**, the support of supervisors and peers, including debriefing opportunities.*

Various Terms for Physician Grief in Literature



Impact and Consequences of Grief



Negative workplace experience or
workplace adversity

Negative thinking

Downward spiral

Burnout

Personal, patient
and economic
consequences

Path to Burnout

Impact and Consequences of Grief

Berger et. al. *Canadian Medical Educ J.* 2019.

Negative workplace experience or
workplace adversity

Use available resources
such as social supports
and leisure activities

Cope

Retain wellness outside
the workplace

Less personal investment
in clinical encounters

Suboptimal residency
training experience

Path to Wellness

Impact and Consequences of Grief

Berger et. al. *Canadian Medical Educ J.* 2019.

Negative workplace experience or
workplace adversity

Engage with the
event and reflect
on the challenging
components

Recognize the
opportunity to
create change and
recover

Enhance one's
baseline attributes

Re-integrate into
the work
environment with
an improved set of
skills to
complement one's
baseline attributes

Seek help when
needed

Path to Resilience

Impact and Consequences of Grief

Berger et. al. *Canadian Medical Educ J.* 2019.

Think-Pair

- What coping strategies do you or others use to cope with grief?
- Are they helpful? If not, how could they be made more beneficial?

Coping Mechanisms

Helpful	Harmful
Supportive	Self-reliant
Confrontative	Evasive
Emotive	Fatalistic

Mengel et al. *Top Clin Nurs.* 1982.

What are “Death Rounds?”

Death Rounds afford an opportunity for physicians-in-training to process as a group their feelings, intense emotions, and insecurities while learning from the dying process.

Khot et al. *Arch Neurol.* 2011.

Overall Purpose

- Offer space to discuss reactions
- Acknowledge and attend to the grief response and emotional impacts
- Provide mentorship on how to cope

INTRO → DEBRIEF → CLOSING

Outline: The Introduction

- Set up: split into small groups (6-8 participants) with 1 group leader
 - If possible, try to have variety in groups
- Introduce yourself and allow for every group member to introduce themselves
- Introduce the idea of death rounds



INTRO → **DEBRIEF** → **CLOSING**

Outline: The Debrief

After introducing the topic and having an initial conversation about healthcare professional grief, the next topic is to discuss individual experiences of patients dying and how the presenter coped with that:

- Please utilize the questions on the next slide to further discussion
- Please **emphasize** no one needs to share if they do not feel comfortable!

INTRO → **DEBRIEF** → CLOSING

Examples of Questions to Utilize

- How does this patient's death compare to your prior experiences with a patient's death?
- Was this patient's death expected or unexpected?
- Did you feel prepared for this patient's death? How could you or the team have been better prepared for the patient's death?
- How does this patient's death emotionally impact you?
- How do you deal with death and dying?



INTRO → **DEBRIEF** → CLOSING

Outline: The Ending

- When it comes time to end the session, please wait for a natural break in conversation to thank everyone for their contributions.
- Please re-iterate that every participant should feel empowered to have these conversations with their colleagues, trainees, and/or supervisors

INTRO → DEBRIEF → CLOSING

Let's Practice

#1 Medical team admits a patient in respiratory distress during flu season. Patient is young without comorbidities. Overnight the patient unexpectedly passes. Trainee is noticeably distressed about the unexpected death and struggling to cope.

#2 Mass casualty occurs in deployed setting. Colleagues are having trouble coping, especially being far from home in an austere environment.

How would you approach your scenario and lead a reflective debrief session?

1. How would you recruit participants? Would this be mandatory? Voluntary?
2. Would you ask participants to prepare for the session and if so how?
3. Who would lead the session? Would it always be you?
4. Would you collect feedback on how the session went? If so, how?
5. What would you be most concerned about when leading a debrief session?

Conclusions

- Grief is a complex emotion that follows a non-linear trajectory and is influenced by a variety of psychosocial factors
- It is important to recognize and address grief because it can adversely impact one's self, trainees, and/or peers.
- Beneficial coping mechanisms include: supportive, confrontative, emotive.
- “Death Rounds” (group debrief) is one potential strategy that uses readily available resources to address and help others cope with grief.

Questions?

