Living with a GRIEVING HEART

THOUGHTS FROM A GRIEF WARRIOR

Objectives:

1. Understand what are the expected immediate changes in a patient's mental, physical, and cognitive status upon the death of a loved one
2. Review the challenges of a grief-stricken patient in the first year after their loved one's death.
3. Outline methods that healthcare providers can use to counsel grieving patients as they confront these challenges
4. Discuss how healthcare providers can facilitate grieving patients in moving through these challenges and, ultimately, achieve healing and live a fulfilling and enjoyable life
5. Review individualized treatment options for those who are grieving

Introduction

Meet Marianne

A grief warrior

Who Is Grieving?

Covid > 1,700,000 deaths, each with 9 affected grievers totaling 15 million

100,000 overdoses x 9 = 1.5 million grievers

Total now = 57% of Americans experiencing loss in the last three years

Majority of our country grieving at the same time

WHAT LEADS TO GRIEF

Have you gone through any of the following in the past 3 years?	
Death of a family member or close friend, excluding your child or partner	32%
Loss of a friendship/relationship	29%
Family member's serious illness or diagnosis of a chronic health condition	23%
Death of your pet	20%
Your own serious illness or diagnosis of a chronic health condition	15%
Loss of job/career	11%
Loss of home or possessions	4%
Divorce	4%
Death of a spouse/partner	3%
Death of your child	2%

What we will Talk About:

Shock / Surprise

“New Normal”

Firsts Without

Grief Over Time

Finding Gratitude

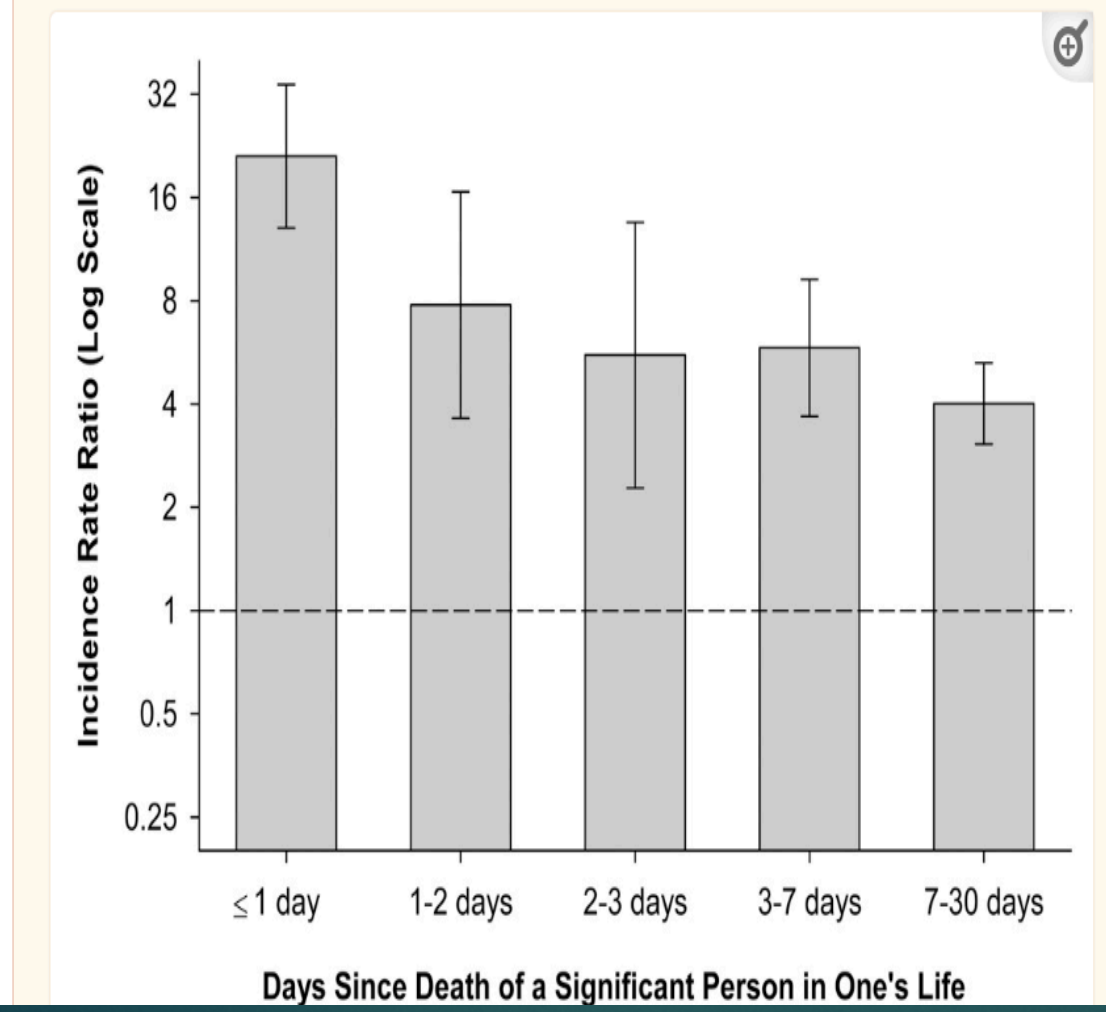
SHOCK / SURPRISE

Emotions / Feelings

Physical Changes

Brain Changes

Takotsubo cardiomyopathy



Author Manuscript
Author Manuscript
Feedback

Blood chemistry changes

Elevated cortisol

Elevated sympathetic activity

Elevated vascular resistance

Elevated inflammatory markers

Elevated prothombotic response

Changes are the same as seen in acute MI with increased

ST

phosphokinases

troponins

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SHOCK / SURPRISE

How do we engage?

Listen, listen, listen

Show up, just be present

Close the computer

Look into the griever’s eyes

Hold hands

Offer a hug

What NOT to Say:

(or stupid things people say when they are trying to make you feel better)

"I know how you feel."

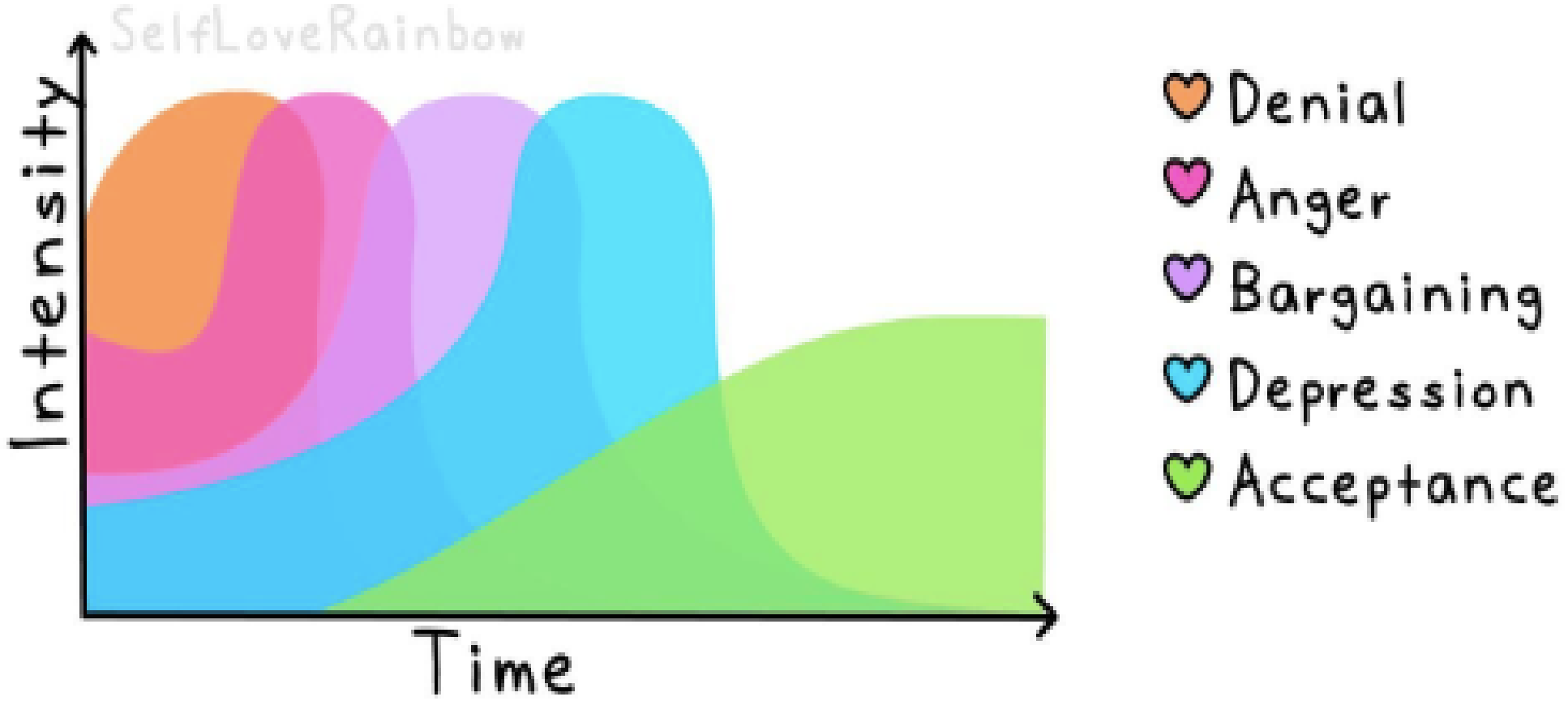
"You have so much to be thankful for."

"Time heals all wounds."

"It's God's will."

"Everything will be OK."

What We Think Grief Looks Like



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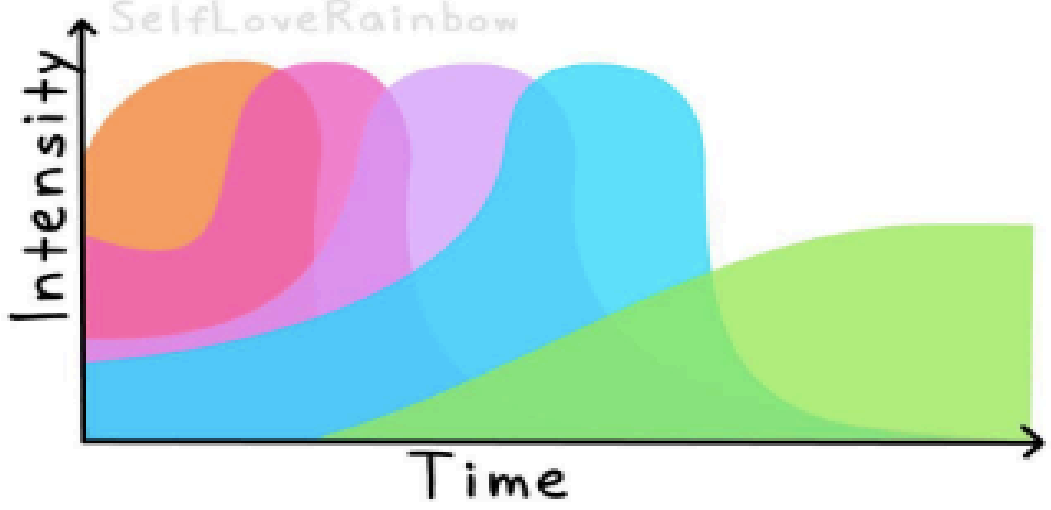

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

What It Actually Looks Like

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Guilt
- Numbness
- Anxiety
- Acceptance

*and so much more

Source: unknown

Worden's Tasks of Mourning

1) Accept the reality of loss

2) Process the pain of grief

3) Adjust to a world without the deceased
   - External: everyday life
   - Internal: affected feelings about self and abilities
   - Spiritual: affected beliefs and views of the world

4) Find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

Worden, J. W. (2009). Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner, Fourth Edition, Springer, N.Y.

How to find a “New Normal”

How To Integrate Loss in Your Life:

Encourage Calm:

-5 Finger Breathing/ relax your jaw

-Tai Chi

-Massage

-Snuggle/contact

-Connect with family, friends, community & pets

Creating a new normal

-Ask for help / make a list

-Make important decisions before noon

-Take a NO GRIEF Day

-Get out in Nature:

use the five senses to focus

-Volunteer

-Practice self compassion

The First Year And Beyond

Firsts Without

Grief fluctuates

Don’t feel bad about FEELING GOOD

Plan for the expected tough days:

anniversaries

birthdays

holidays

Be with friends / family

Finding an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

Make room for thoughts of lost loved ones

include in a prayer

tell an uplifting story

make their favorite food

Then let go and stay in the present

Grief Over Time

How shall I grieve?

How long will I grieve?

Letting Go of Pain/Holding on to memories

Finding Gratitude

HAPPINESS: Is letting go of what you thought your life should be and embracing and engaging in all that it is now.

I woke up, I am OK, My family is good: this is GREAT.

Look how far I have come
I am not a victim
I am a victor

ALASKA

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
HEALTH CENTER
School of Medicine

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen."

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

SO ARE YOU