



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW 2

BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF 4

GRIEF SUPPORT OUTLINE 8

BIBLIOGRAPHY 15

GRIEF DIRECTORY 16

Introduction

Our group, coming from backgrounds of ministerial work, personal life experience, and end of life/death care work, has seen the lack of access to a directory of local licensed mental health care providers who provide individuals these types of resources. The idea behind this grief support directory was to have an organized, condensed reference for those who are caregivers before, during, and after a death occurs. Many times these professionals, such as those who provide religious ministries, health care services, as well as any other professions that deal with death and grief on a daily basis (e.g. funeral directors, first responders, the coroner's office, and law enforcement) would benefit from having an organized list of licensed mental health professionals to be able to provide to those in need of assistance. This directory would serve as a resource for professionals who provide licensed counseling and therapeutic support.

One of our goals was to find an organization or individual to house this directory and keep it up to date as well as to distribute it both digitally and in print. Kosciusko County Hospice showed interest in housing this directory, but we were unable to get a firm commitment from them. This information can still be distributed both digitally and in print if so desired.

The second idea of this project was to start a local grief support group. People who prefer a more casual group setting would be able to work on healing and overcoming struggles with grief as well as being able to meet new people and forge relationships and friendships with those who are struggling in a similar manner. Finding relatability as a human being is so elemental to our existence. Discovering that you are

not the only one who is struggling to make peace with the death of a loved one brings hope and comfort to continue to live a full life. This mission was the passion that drove the group project.

The First United Methodist Church of Warsaw is led by Pastor Brian Smith. Pastor Smith is extremely interested in starting a grief support group at their church. The task was to find a “group leader” who could attend and lead this support group most every Saturday evening at 4:00 p.m. The church and our group thought this was a good time and day of the week to have these weekly grief support meetings. We were hopeful that being set at that time and day people would be more apt to spend the evening together (maybe even go out to dinner or a movie) to continue to grow and heal with other members of the group.

Our first choice as a group was to have the chaplain at Hospice lead the group. During our consults he seemed to be very interested although there were some conflicts. We had some conversations to discuss these conflicts (which dealt with compensation and job responsibilities) and it seemed as though some of the issues may have been able to be resolved. We as a group also came up with a back-up plan of providing a general outline of how to communicate with people who are bereaved as well as a general protocol for the group. This outline also included signs and symptoms of bereaved individuals, techniques to assist bereaved individuals, as well as sample conversation question starters for a group meeting. This way, any individual who is interested in starting a grief group has some reference of how to start to try and help those who are bereaved. Unfortunately, we could not get a firm commitment for a group leader to be able to launch this grief group as of now. Pastor Brian is still actively

looking for another possible group leader. Since Derek is a local funeral director, he believes that it is conflict of interest to lead this group; a group leader who is not a local funeral director would be a better fit to offer an organic, open atmosphere for all attendees. We feel that with this grief group outline anyone who is interested and committed to starting a grief support group could in fact do so with these resources.

As we went through the different class sessions of KLA, we continued to hear about the opioid epidemic in our county, state, and country. Sometimes we do not realize all of the other problems and causes of deaths that we do face as a country. As we mentioned before, all death and grief is difficult, but some can be more difficult than others especially when it is unexpected. According to CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), Indiana had 13,462 people die from cancer in 2017 (ranked 10th among all states); 3,978 deaths from accidents (ranked 16th among all states) and 1,092 suicides (ranked 25th among all states). After seeing these state rankings of the top 10 leading causes of death, it is more apparent that this directory service has a much greater need than we realized.

Bereavement and Grief

“I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process.” C.S. Lewis.¹ There is no easy solution for grief. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines bereavement as “the state or fact of being bereaved or deprived of something or someone.”² This state of being deprived or experiencing loss is a life-changing event that leaves individuals in a state of emotional distress and anguish. When someone close to you dies, the emotions felt can be

¹ C.S Lewis, A Grief Observed

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bereavement>, accessed March 28, 2019.

sadness, worry, fear, confusion, anger, a sense of feeling cheated, relief, guilt and a sense of being lost. While this is not an exhaustive list, these are all normal human emotions associated with loss. They are natural reactions to a loss of a close relationship.

Bereavement can impact how individuals see their world which directly impacts their ability to think and function in everyday life. “You can’t put a timer on feelings of pain after loss; nor can you diminish or avoid the suffering. In fact, if you suppress or deny your grief, the pain is likely to return again and again. You must deal with it anew each time.”³ Grief is defined as a “deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement.”⁴ Grief impacts people in a variety of different ways. Grieving can impact a person’s ability to sleep well, eat, concentrate and enjoy life in general.

According to Elisabeth Kubler and David Kessler, there are five stages of grief that include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance but people do not always experience these stages in any order, nor do they experience every stage.⁵ According to the five stages, it is very common for someone to feel lost and for life to simply not make sense. Life during this time can become numb and one can experience a state of shock. The confusion then can lead to anger that is set off by the smallest details. The anger then turns to the endless “what if” questions of bargaining for different results if the individual could have done something differently. Once the mental notions of bargaining subsides a little, depression can set into the present circumstances and a withdrawal from life.⁶ This cycle generally ends with the

³ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/grief>, accessed March 28, 2019.

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grief>, accessed March 28, 2019.

⁵ <https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>, accessed March 28, 2019.

⁶ <https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>

acceptance that the person is gone and there needs to be an adjustment for the new reality of life. It is apparent that each of these stages can have a healthy progression of recovery; however, if not managed properly some devastating life results can occur. Grief is not something that needs to be managed in isolation or by individualistic suffering.

Grief counseling can be a very difficult undertaking. Even after seminary training, pastors find themselves feeling underprepared and not being able to say the right words. This is not to say that pastoral/faith based counsel is not good and valid. It *is* saying, however, that there are some complexities of the grief stages in which a trained/licensed counselor is better equipped. Far fewer things in life are as difficult as losing a close personal relationship due to a death. Journeying through this pain in a healthy way takes time, tools and professional help. The directory that has been designed for this project is a tool to help people who are going through the pain of grief find the needed help. The directory is also a resource for pastors, clergy of all faiths, medical facilities, funeral homes and individuals to find professional grief counseling by qualified counselors that service Kosciusko County. It is imperative that people going through grief be honest, ask questions and get the appropriate help needed to face the new realities of life.

The Northern Award grant of \$1,000 is an excellent way that Kosciusko Leadership Academy continues to give back and invest in our beautiful community. We believe that this money could be used to help compensate a group leader to take on the grief group and help maintain and update the directory data. The one barrier that we

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/indiana/indiana.htm> , accessed March 1, 2019.

came across through this project was getting a group leader to commit to taking on a grief group due to compensation. We had Pastor Brian and the hospice Chaplain interested, but both had barriers keeping them from committing. By receiving the \$1,000 this would help to eliminate the barriers and get a grief group to begin.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the Kosciusko County Leadership Academy 2018-2019.

Grief Support Outline

Resources for bereavement group leader:

<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/grief/griefcounselingresourceguide.pdf>

Techniques used for assisting the bereaved

It is important to educate bereaved persons that the single most important thing they can do for themselves during their period of mourning is to allow themselves to grieve in their own way. There is no right way or right amount of time. The important thing is that they honestly look at what they are feeling: anger, sadness, guilt or other emotions. It is important that they share their thoughts and feelings with someone they trust – a friend, family member, clergy, therapist, or other trusted individual.

There are many specific questions to be asked and techniques to be employed in assisting the bereaved with their grief process.

- Create a helping environment by finding a quiet, private place to talk and by projecting warmth, interest and respect.
- When speaking of the deceased, use the past tense, use the deceased's name, and use words such as death, died, dead.
- Begin the first encounter with the bereaved by asking him/her to talk about the death – what happened that day or night.
- Ask him/her about any funeral or memorial services.
- Ask him/her what has been happening since the death. How have things been with family/friends? Does he/she seem able to talk openly about the deceased?
- The following questions may encourage a person to reflect on his/her grief reaction:

-Some people have trouble eating or sleeping after they have lost someone they love. Are you eating alright?

-Are you getting out of the house and engaging in any former activities or hobbies?

-Is there anything bothering you in particular these days?

- Ask about other difficult times in his/her life. Were these recent or in the past? How someone has responded to past losses can tell a great deal about how they are likely to adjust to the current loss.
- Ask what coping skills he/she utilized in past crises; encourage him/her to utilize those same resources at this time.
- Help them acknowledge their past accomplishments as a way to reestablish self-esteem.
- Affirm their ability to survive their current loss.
- Ask them about their relationship with the deceased.
- Help them examine their special qualities and talents that endeared them to the deceased.
- Most grief experts warn against making a drastic change too soon after the death of a loved one (examples include moving to a new home, getting into a new relationship). These premature changes are often viewed as an attempt to “run away” from the pain of grief.
- Remind the survivor that it is normal to feel overwhelmed by the intensity of his/her feelings.

- Help him/her identify feelings of loss and feel pain. Acknowledge that pain is a part of the grief experience, but reassure him/her the pain will not always be so intense.
- Give him/her permission to cry.
- Give him/her permission to feel relieved if he/she does.
- Acknowledge that setbacks do happen and not to panic. Explain that it may feel like an emotional roller coaster at times, but that these are merely remnants of grief and not a signal that he/she is starting over again.
- Grief is an exhausting process physically and emotionally, so it is important to encourage the bereaved to take extra care of themselves by eating balanced meals, drinking plenty of water, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and limiting alcohol and other mind-altering drugs, as they can hinder the grief process.
- Suggest that they be patient not only with themselves, but with others who may not understand what they are feeling.
- Remind them to have realistic expectations about how quickly they will heal from the pain of grief.
- Encourage them to take one day at a time. At times, it might be easier to break the day into manageable increments.
- Suggest that they start slowly to return to their normal routine by doing small customary chores such as shopping.
- One grief therapist suggests that the bereaved set goals for themselves for six months at a time, picking two or three realistic goals and establishing a deadline

to accomplish them. Setting goals provides security and a renewed control over one's life.

- Doing small things for other people can also be helpful to someone who is grieving in that it takes attention off the bereaved and their pain for awhile.
- Reassure them that it is also alright to set limits with people and to say *no*.
- Validate the survivor as they develop new skills and take on new roles.
- Affirm their right to feel joy and hope and to eventually have another relationship, without viewing these as being disloyal to the deceased.

Here are some specific aids to be utilized with the bereaved:

- Some bereaved feel the need, especially right after the death, to find out everything they can about the illness and/or circumstance of their loved one's death, and sometimes they want to review the medical records. This is normal and especially typical in a sudden death.
- Encourage the use of symbols and "transitional objects" such as photos, audio or video tapes, articles of clothing or jewelry, or a collection that was special to the deceased.
- Suggest writing a letter to the deceased or to God expressing his/her thoughts or feelings.
- Suggest keeping a journal of the grief experience, or special thoughts, poems and remembrances.
- Reading about grief often helps to normalize their grief experience. Bookstores, libraries, hospices and the Internet all have excellent grief resources.

- Family members could put together a memory book that includes stories about family events, photos, poems, drawings, etc. They could also make a memory box, in which some special items are kept that can be shared with others or kept as a keepsake.
- Suggest the use of art work to express their grief feelings.
- One grief therapist suggests that the bereaved person play out in his/her mind the “unfinished business” from the relationship with the deceased and try to come to a resolution. It is sometimes helpful to focus on what the survivor was able to do for the deceased instead of what they should have done.
- The “empty chair” technique, where the bereaved person imagines the deceased and is encouraged to express whatever they need to say is another effective method for “unfinished business.”
- Role-play can be helpful when the bereaved face situations that are feared or that they feel awkward about – like starting a new relationship. Role play can build stronger coping skills.

Grief Support Group Conversation Questions

- How has your week been?
- What do you miss most about not having your loved one with you anymore?
- What do you do for yourself to help you cope with the death?
- How would s/he want me to live my life?
- How can I honor his/her memory?
- How can I use the experience of my loss to help others who are grieving?

- How can I let others into my life in a new way?
- How can I live my life in a healthy and giving way?
- How can I find positive ways to cope?
- How can I allow myself to be vulnerable again?
- How have things been with your family and friends?
- How are you feeling about that?
- Can you tell me about your loved one?
- Have you been through any other difficult times recently?
- When I was going through a difficult time, something I tried was 'X'... do you think this could help you?
- What can I do to help?
- How would you describe the deceased?
- What is your favorite memory of the deceased?
- What did you call them—any nicknames or terms of endearment?
- Is there a particular lesson learned from the deceased?
- How long did you know the deceased?
- What do you think the deceased valued most in life?
- What words would you use to describe his or her character?
- How would you describe the deceased's personality?
- How did you meet?
- What is a particular time you recall the deceased was especially joyful?
- A time he or she was embarrassed?
- What is your earliest memory of this person?

- What was the deceased's laugh like?
- Was he or she chronically late or early?
- Do you have any funny stories about times you spent together?
- Do you remember any favorite stories about childhood that the deceased loved to tell?
- Do you remember stories he or she would tell about:
 - Military
 - College
 - getting married
 - becoming a parent
 - going to prom
 - learning how to drive
- Did the deceased ever discuss big decisions they made that impacted his or her life?
- Were there any major changes to the deceased's life that affected them in big ways?
- If you knew they could drop by and visit tomorrow, what would your ideal day spent together look like?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/indiana/indiana.htm> , accessed March 1, 2019.

C.S Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. HarperOne, 2001.

<https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>.

<https://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/>, accessed March 28, 2019.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grief>, accessed March 28, 2019.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bereavement>, accessed March 28, 2019.

<https://www.modernheirloombooks.com/35-questions-to-ask-to-prompt-memories-of-lost-loved-one-tribute-book>.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/grief>, accessed March 28, 2019.

<https://www.vitas.com/resources/grief-and-bereavement/techniques-to-assist-the-bereaved>. Sourced on March 10, 2019.