

Making Meaning

The Sixth Stage of Grief

July 27th, 2022



A few reminders...

- Please update your display name to include your name, pronouns, and role (Peer Supporter or Supervisor)
 - Place your cursor over your name in the “Participant” list, click on the three dots that you see to the right, and select “Change Name”
- Live Transcription is available
- Stay muted until time for discussion to limit distraction
- Feel free to use the chat option to participate in discussion
- Please turn on your video for discussion today, if possible



Agenda for Today

1

Meaning Making as a Stage of Greif

2

Losing Someone you Worked With

3

Making Meaning & Moving Forward

What is Grief?

We can grieve any change or loss in our lives not just death, even positive change, like graduating or moving, can evoke grief.

Grief is not just sadness, it is a complicated process that encompasses a lot of different feelings and behaviors

Two Levels of Impact



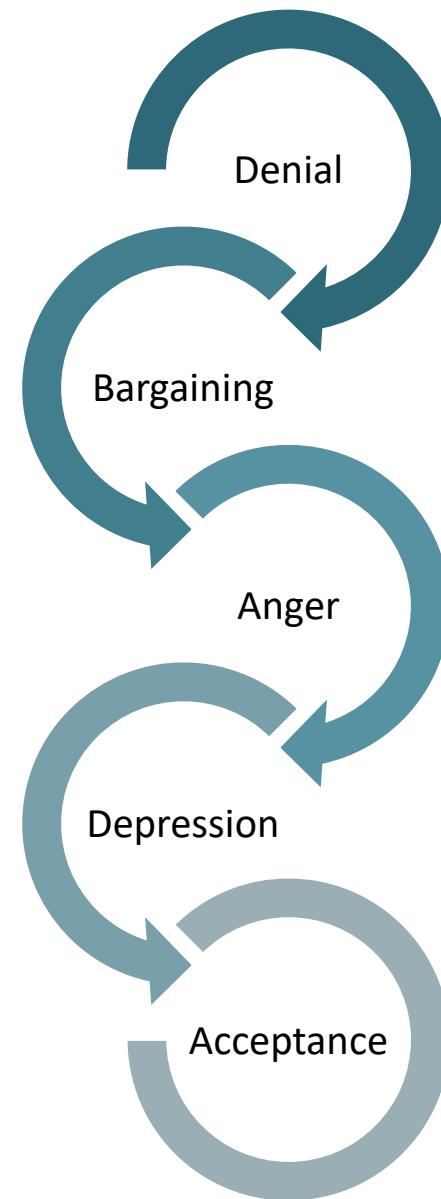
Personal



Professional

Grief Model

- There are many models of grief, we will be talking about the Kubler-Ross model or the 5 stages of grief
 - Commonly discussed model
 - Emerged out of working with people who were dying
 - Then found that those who lost loved ones experienced the same process
 - Have since found that any loss, even a “good” loss, can evoke grief

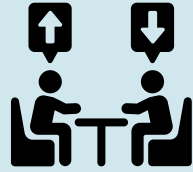


Grief in Recovery



1. Denial

I don't have a problem, I don't use any more than anyone else I hang out with, I'm only hurting myself with my use, so it doesn't matter



2. Bargaining

I'll only drink/use on weekends, I'll start training for a 5k and that will fix my problems, I'll move to a new town and I'll leave all my problems behind



3. Anger

I shouldn't have to deal with this, I have been through so many tough things already why do I have to deal with this too?



4. Depression

My life is going to be boring or lonely if I quit using or drinking, I will never be happy again, What's the point of getting clean or sober?



5. Acceptance

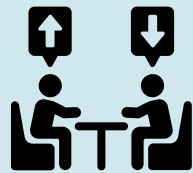
I need to take steps to deal with my drinking and using, I don't have to like or even want to make these changes but I understand that I need to try

Breakout Room Discussion

1. What are some of the things that you've seen people you work with grieve, or grieved yourself, in the recovery process? Which stages of grief do you see most commonly in early recovery? Which stages do you see later in the recovery process?
2. How have you witnessed or experienced grief as a Peer or Peer supervisor? Which stage of grief stands out to you most as you reflect on that experience?
3. Have you witnessed or experienced a stage of grief that is particularly intense? Have you seen others go through that stage of grief? What do you notice as you look back now?



1. Denial



2. Bargaining



3. Anger

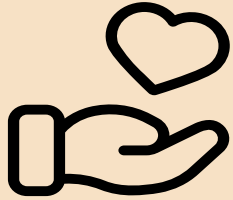


4. Depression



5. Acceptance

The Sixth Stage of Grief

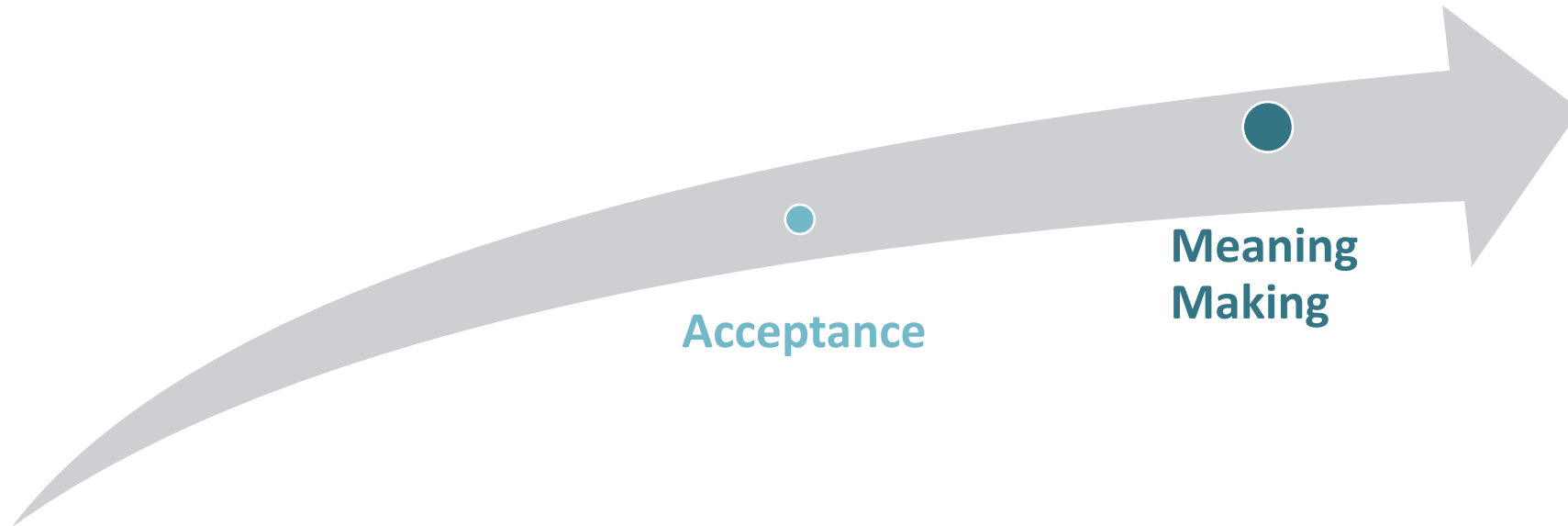


6. Meaning Making

The first 5 stages were based on the stages of death and dying--but living people continue to process loss, and their lives change in response to that loss. Making meaning emerged out of continued research and work on the grief process.

A sixth stage of grief has emerged from research on grief and grieving and it is called ***Making Meaning***

Making Meaning: The sixth stage of grief



- **Acceptance** is important because it leads us to take steps toward **making something beautiful out of painful experiences.**
- In this the part of the grieving process, you use your experiences, the things you've been through, **to make something easier for someone else.**

Examples of Making Meaning



Setting up a foundation or a grant in the name of someone you lost to substance use



Planting a tree or a garden in honor of someone you've lost to substance use



Sharing your experience about a painful part of your own history with someone that is going through something similar and connecting with them in a deep way



Volunteering for an organization that supports people who are going through difficult things you've gone through

Important Things to Know



No two people are
going to make
meaning the same way



You can't skip to the
making meaning part
of the grieving process

Losing Someone You Worked With

- Losing people that you know and care about is a part of spending time around people who use substances and in recovery spaces
- In peer work, often use personal experiences as a professional tool
- In grief, taking professional experience and using it in your personal life may be helpful

Breakout Room Discussion

1. No two people experience a loss the same way. What different responses to loss or change have you witnessed or experienced? What impact did these differences have on your work with peers or other professionals?
2. How has grief affected your work as a Peer positively or negatively? How do you go on helping others as a Peer when you're grieving the loss of an individual you've provided services to?
3. How have your experiences as a Peer, or someone who works with people in recovery, allowed you to make meaning out of challenges or losses in your life? How is Peer work meaning-making work?

*Loss can be a collective loss (such as the opioid epidemic) or a specific loss

Making Meaning & Peer Work



Big feelings, such as anger and depression, can act as spotlights on areas of our pasts that are still tender and that we are still working through or grieving. When this happens...

- Be gentle with yourself as much as possible!
- Consider how you might begin to lay the groundwork for making meaning of these tough things

Tips for Moving Forward



You move forward with the losses you experience - you don't move on from them.



Don't go too fast! You can't rush the process. You have to feel your feelings the whole way through and meaning will come in its own time.



You absolutely CAN do things to make meaning possible.

- Think about the losses - of people, places, things, relationships - that are still hard for you and consider what could or would feel important to you to make something meaningful out of those experiences.

Tips for Moving Forward



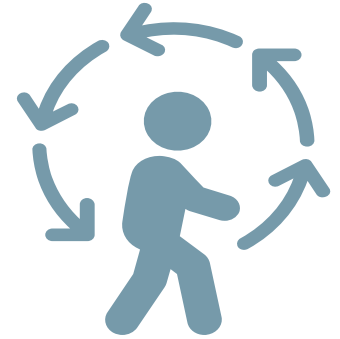
Share with people you trust

Talking about the ways that you are making meaning out of challenging experiences with other Peers.



Reflect

Look back and see how things that used to be painful or cause you to feel angry have transformed.



Incorporate rituals

Creating a ritual can be a great way to make meaning. There are one time and recurring rituals.

Group Discussion



- What examples of rituals can you think of that make meaning out of something challenging or painful?
 - Things you've heard about in your culture
 - Things you've heard about from other cultures
 - Big picture or large-scale examples
 - Things your friends and family do

Thank you to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services (DBHDS) State Opioid Response (SOR) grant team for supporting this webinar!

Questions? Contact us at:

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