

Brigham Young University School of Social Work
Grief & Loss in Clinical Practice
Annual Social Work Conference
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Understanding Grief Through Storytelling, Music, and Poetry

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Introduction

Part One Music, Story and Poems can preserve memories, stir deep understanding and inspire hope

1. The Importance of Self Care As We Work Together This Afternoon

- Our Past losses May Be Triggered
- Our Worst Fears May Get Stirred Up
- We May Experience Generalized, Existential Anxiety – The Five Remembrances:
My body is of a nature to age. This cannot be prevented
My body is of a nature to become ill. This cannot be prevented
My body will someday die. This cannot be prevented
Everyone I love will be lost through death
What remains is my legacy: my words, my thoughts and my actions

2. Your Own Losses and Personal Grief May be Your Greatest Teachers – Poetry by Denise Low

- The Value of a Maintaining an Open-hearted Presence With Clients/Patients
even when your heart is breaking
even when you find yourself being triggered
Bernadette Johnson's Poem, Nothing To Say
The possibility for a sacred alliance between patient/client and healthcare provider
Rilke's poem, It's Possible

3. The Value of Learning From Our Formative Grief Memories

4. Welcoming Our Deceased Loved Ones Who Have Died Into Our Hearts (Andrew Harvey, Denise Low, Ancient Melodies)

- Becoming an Open-hearted, Vulnerable Counselor
- Bernadette Johnson's Poem, Nothing To Say
- Stories of Childhood Traumatic Loss
Tell Me Papa, story
Birdsong (author unknown)
Patience, Persistence, Compassion

Part Two:

1. How Poetry Infuses Deeper Understandings of our Grief Journeys (Stages of Transition)
2. Understanding The Grief Journey through the lens of poetry
 - A. Early Grief or Our First Encounter With a Loss: “No!! You are lying!!! It's Impossible!!!”

disbelief, shock, helplessness, anger, guilt, deep sadness, fear, distress, numbness

 - Poetry by Rumi and Rilke
 - B. The Second Storm: “Help!!! Can I survive!!!”
 - Renewed shock, shame, increased despair, desperate for relief, risk of suicide and substance abuse increases, often a time we seek help
 - Identify, Express and Share
 - Poetry by Natasha Tretheway, Emily Dickinson
 - C. The Search for Meaning (Poetry by Jane Yolen, Ed Meek, Wendell Berry, Jennifer Welwood)
 - Who am I now?
 - How have I changed?
 - What do I believe?
 - What will I do with my life?
 - Who am I becoming?
3. Music is Where the Proof of Life Is Stored (Norman Cousins, Composer Gideon Klein, Story of Terezin)

Closing Thoughts on Self-Care

Closing Exercises