Leaders Grieve Too!

HeartLight Center
Virtual Summit
August 2023

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Introduction

Learning Objectives

* Learn the language associated with grief, mourning, burnout, compassion fatigue, & COVID
* Determine who is at risk
* To implement self care/prevention plan

Purpose/Goal

* To enlighten professionals by exploring these formerly taboo subjects and their impact on our well being
* To equip professionals with knowledge & tools for self care & prevention, thus improving client care

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Poll

* Death of a loved one (close)?
* Death loss within the last 3 years (since the pandemic)?
* Covid-19 loss?
* Make final arrangements?
* Grief support?
Get to know me!

Fun Facts

Likes/Dislikes

* Help others heal
* Dance & have fun
* Being a Dog Mom
* Seeing others hurting
* Critters of any kind
* Time wasted

Mister Cunningham & Bentley Sebastian Cunningham

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Steel Magnolias
What grief looks like...

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
What does grief look like?

People tend to believe that grief shrinks over time.

What really happens is that we grow around our grief.
Grief... no longer taboo!
Mass Trauma
Pulse Check – How’s your heart?

- Covid 19 death count in the millions
- Political unrest
- Shootings
- Ukraine war, etc
- Suicide rate increased
- Pandemic aftermath – ambiguous grief: can I go back to my normal life?
The Pandemic changed our world

Then

* Live
* **Grief/Loss** & Final Disposition
* Worship
* Healthcare
* Mental Healthcare

Now

* Societal embrace of complexities of mental health
* Awareness heightened

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Language of Grief
It’s about loss

Grief
* Death
* Employment
* Home
* Disaster
* Divorce
* Broken Relationship
* Health
* Incarceration
* Relocation

Pandemic Awareness of Loss
* Normalcy
* Stability
* Trust
* Safety
* Belief
* Identity
* Presence

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Grief is about loss

things we grieve

the loss of a loved one
the loss of a pet
a breakup or a divorce

things we might also grieve

major life transitions
being unable to achieve a goal or fulfill a dream
a diagnosis
not living the life we hoped we would live

the effects of big decisions (even when those decisions are ultimately good for us)

a friendship breakup
the person we were before something traumatic or life-altering occurred

moving to a new location

losing a job or switching careers

a faith transition or a shift in our other beliefs

© Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Grief is universal

* No one is exempt

* A natural, internal emotional and chemical response to ANY loss
Don’t get over it but adjust to it

Everyone grieves differently (untruth); everyone grieves the same, mourns differently

If you don’t deal with it, it will deal with you
Language of Grief

* Affects our total person: physically, spiritually, emotionally, and behaviorally

* Not orderly or predictable; inevitable; none are immune!

* Time alone does not heal all / up to 5 years
Griefwork

“I feel drained!”

- The psychological process of coping with a significant loss

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Grief gone public

Outward expression

The external response to loss

Strongly influenced by culture/society

“In order to live well, we must mourn well.” Dr. Alan Wolfelt
**Physical** – appetite change, crying, insomnia, fatigue, etc.

**Spiritual** – unable to pray or attend religious activities, reject God, enter into relationship with God, nature, moral values, etc.
Common Grief Responses

- **Emotional** – confusion, shock, disbelief, etc.
- **Behavioral** – disorganized, forgetful, disoriented, etc.
* GRIEF of current loss is attached to undealt w/issues
* RCA – identify the origin of a problem using specific steps
We Must Deal with Our Grief/Issues
Tools for Toolbox - Prevention

- Practice what you preach
- Identify & use your support system
- Set boundaries – life outside of work

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Tools for Toolbox – Self Care

- Exercise, rest, eat healthy
- Deep breathing
- Fun, laughter
- Meditation, time alone to sit in grief
- Massage Therapy
- Participate in grief support of some kind
- Journaling
- Gardening
- Volunteering
- Visit physician
- Dancing

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
How you can help your clients

- Self care – take care of YOU!
- Encourage self care for client
- Deal with them where they are
- Provide resources
- Participate in continuing education
- Empower them
- Acknowledge & validate their grief/loss(es)
- Remember them on special days
- Be patient
Serotonin Break!
Is this you?
A state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward.

- 3 components:
  - Emotional Exhaustion
  - Depersonalization
  - Decreased sense of accomplishment

(Burnout, Nagoski & Nagoski 2019)
A lot of Americans experience Burnout
Mentally, Emotionally, Spiritually & Psychologically exhausted
Overcompensate too long & you need a break
You CAN recover through positive self care!
The physical, emotional, and spiritual result of **CHRONIC** self-sacrifice and/or prolonged exposure to difficult situations that renders a person unable to love, nurture, care for, or empathize with another’s suffering. (Harris & Griffin, 2014, p.82)

It’s more than being overworked, and it’s a threat to the safety of your patients, your own wellbeing, your relationships, and your career. (Pepsi Non Profit)

For some people, it may be time for another career / transition time

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
Employee burnout is a global concern. In a marketplace survey of over 1000 respondents by Deloitte, 77% say they have experienced burnout at their current job. 91% say that unmanageable stress or frustration impacts the quality of their work, and 83% say burnout can negatively impact personal relationships.

US professionals explored the drivers & impact of employee burnout, while also providing insight into the benefits & programs employees feel can help prevent or alleviate burnout versus those their companies are currently offering.
Who is at risk?

- Mental Health Professionals
- Healthcare providers: nurses/aides, doctors, paramedics, respiratory therapists
- Fireman
- Law Enforcement
- Hospice/Palliative Care
- Educators/Teachers
- Clergy
- Lawyers
- Chronic caregivers
- Funeral Directors/Morticians
- Veterinarians
- Military personnel
BURNOUT Red Flags

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Irritability or Anger
- Detachment
- Dread of working w/certain people or going to work
- Reduced performance
- Alienation from work related activities
- Excessive absences
- Physical complaints
- Blame others for your mistakes
Intrusive negative thoughts
Skepticism, Frustration
Loss of hope; tiredness
Questioning one’s contribution

Physical problems (lethargy, headaches, gastrointestinal distress, insomnia)
Lack of perceived managerial support
Complex patient/family needs; conflictual interactions
Expanding workload
Compassion Fatigue

* Consists of two main main elements: burnout and secondary trauma
* Journal of Public Health, 2/2021
The main results we found showed an increase in the rate of burnout, dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and compassion fatigue; a reduction in personal accomplishment; and levels of compassion satisfaction similar to those before the pandemic.
Prevention Plan – same as in grief
A few additions...

- Communicate you are experiencing CF
- Rest
- Vitamins/Probiotics/ Minerals 50 years of age & up
- Stay in tune with bloodwork: thyroid, hormones, vitamin D
- Unplug / Getaway (not vacay)
Tools to help the healing process continue

- Set boundaries w/coworkers, families, clients, etc.
- Work / Life Balance
- Rotate care of difficult families
- Meditation / Quiet time alone
- Deep breathing
- Be organized
- Socialize

©Dr. Tonya Cunningham 2023
You only get ONE YOU!

- If unaddressed, burn out can become a serious mental health issue
- CF can lead to death
Call to Action!

- By the end of the day of TODAY, determine your self care plan and start implementing ONE THING from that list
- Assessment – Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROQOL)
Always remember...

RECOVERY IS NOT FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED IT, IT'S FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT IT.
Questions/Comments

Thank You!