Skills for Living with Loss

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Recommended Citation
McNeil, Emily, "Skills for Living with Loss" (2021). Undergraduate Research Symposium. 60. Available at: https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/60

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Skills for Living with Loss

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BACKGROUND ON GRIEF

- Normative but highly life changing
- By 65: One half of all women and 10% of all men experience loss of spouse (Neimeyer & Holland, 2015)
- Most older adults are resilient following the death of a loved one
Trajectories of Grief

STEREOTYPES AND MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF PROCESS

- Grief happens in stages (Kübler-Ross, 1969)
  - Denial, Anger, Protest, Depression, Acceptance, Recovery
- Recent research questions the legitimacy of these stages
  - Acceptance occurs early on
  - No clear separation of emotional phases over time (Holland & Neimeyer, 2010)
- Grief Work Hypothesis (Freud, 1957)
  - Belief that grieving includes working through painful emotions to let go of attachment
CURRENT GRIEF THEORIES

• More recent theories take into account the individuality of bereavement
• Specify the variety of ways in which people cope
• Examples:
  – Models based off individual's personal values and strengths
INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

• Traditionally, grief counseling was thought to be simple
• However, losses can be complicated and complex
• The traditional models were unable to extend and include interventions for those who were experiencing more complex losses
• Newer intervention strategies work towards treating complicated bereavement in ways they can use later in life as well
• Examples: Behavioral Activation and Emotional Regulation
2nd edition involved turning traditional therapy protocol into accessible handouts

- Fall 2019 - UMSL Health & Aging lab, I assisted with the revision of “Living with Loss” module
- I specifically worked on sections involving:
  - Loss of Home
  - Loss of Pets
  - Self-care
Personalized Skills for Living with Loss: Loss 9 Practice

Coping with the Loss of My Home

Date(s): ____________

I can ask a family member or friend for support as I practice coping skills.

Situations this week when I missed my home the most:
1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________

Positive Coping Behaviors:
☐ I took care of my physical health (meals, sleep, exercise, etc.).
☐ I engaged in a positive, rewarding, or meaningful activity.
☐ Other: ____________

Honoring My Home:
☐ I looked at pictures of my home.
☐ I thought about the special memories I created at my home.
☐ I talked to others about my home or my feelings.
☐ Other: ____________

Keeping Contact with My Home:
☐ I asked a friend or family member to visit my home for me.
☐ I visited my home.
☐ Other: ____________

Positive Coping Statements – I reminded myself that:
☐ This home will always have a place in my heart.
☐ I looked after my home the best I could.
☐ Other: ____________

Overall, how effective were these in helping me cope?

Not effective Somewhat effective Very effective

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

150x100
Personalized Skills for Living with Loss: Loss 7 Practice

Coping with the Loss of My Pet

Date(s): _________

I can ask a family member or friend for support as I practice coping skills.

Situations this week when I missed my pet the most:

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

Positive Coping Behaviors:
☐ I took care of my physical health (meals, sleep, exercise, etc.).
☐ I engaged in a positive, rewarding, or meaningful activity.
☐ Other: _________________________________________________________

Honoring or Valuing My Pet:
☐ I thought about my first time with my pet.
☐ I talked to others about my pet or my feelings.
☐ Other: _________________________________________________________

Contact with Other Animals:
☐ I asked a friend or family member to bring their pet over.
☐ I volunteered or visited a pet shelter.
☐ Other: _________________________________________________________

Positive Coping Statements:
☐ I reminded myself that I am grateful for the time I had with my pet.
☐ I reminded myself that I did the best I could when caring for them.
☐ Other: _________________________________________________________

What I learned about coping with my grief this week.

_______________________________________________________________
Personalized Skills for Living with Loss: Loss 2 Practice

My Self-Care This Week

Date(s): __________

"Self-Care" refers to a range of behaviors and habits linked to my physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. Even as I grieve, I can engage in self-care activities that promote my health and wellness.

I can circle each day I did one of these activities to take care of myself. I can ask a family member or friend for support as I practice these skills.

Over the past week, I did:

- Engage in some physical activity
- Eat healthy meals and snacks
- Get at least 6 hours of sleep
- Take my medication properly
- Have contact with nature in some way
- Participate in a soothing activity
- Have contact with a person or animal who helps me feel cared for
- Do an activity that I have valued in the past
- Engage in a spiritual or religious activity
- Another area of wellness:

What I learned this week about taking care of myself while I grieve:
I can circle each day I did one of these activities to take care of myself. I can ask a family member or friend for support as I practice these skills.

Over this past week, did I:

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Engage in some physical activity
Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Eat healthy meals and snacks
Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Get at least 6 hours of sleep
Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Take my medication properly
Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Have contact with nature in some way
REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE

• Not everyone who experiences a loss needs grief counseling
  – Can do more harm than good
• Debunked the myths and beliefs I had surrounding grief and loss of a loved one
  – I held many of the traditional beliefs regarding grief
REFERENCES


THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?