

University of Missouri, St. Louis

IRL @ UMSL

Undergraduate Research Symposium

UMSL Undergraduate Works

2021

Skills for Living with Loss

Emily McNeil
eemcp6@mail.umsi.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://irl.umsi.edu/urs>



Part of the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#), [Geropsychology Commons](#), and the [Health Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McNeil, Emily, "Skills for Living with Loss" (2021). *Undergraduate Research Symposium*. 60.
Available at: <https://irl.umsi.edu/urs/60>

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the UMSL Undergraduate Works at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsi.edu.

Skills for Living with Loss

Emily McNeil, B.S.

May 2020, University of Missouri- St. Louis

Rater, Washington University School of Medicine

UMSL





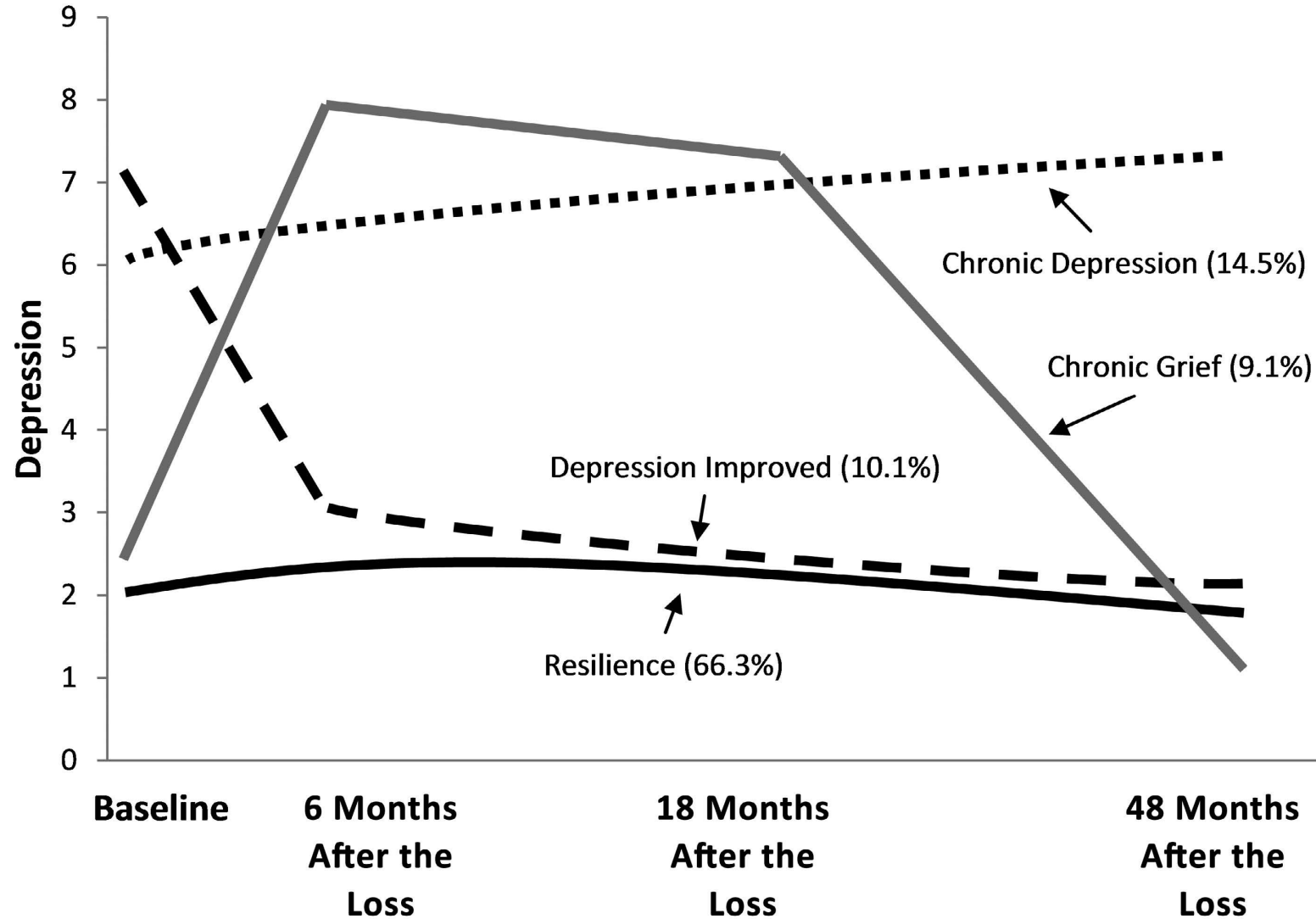
BACKGROUND ON GRIEF

- 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



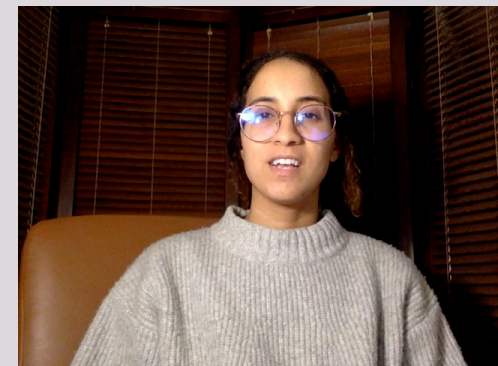
Trajectories of Grief

(GALATZER-LEVY, I. R., & BONANNO, G. A., 2012)



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



Treatments *ThatWork*

Treating Later-Life Depression

A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach

WORKBOOK

ANN M. STEFFEN
LEAH P. DICK-SISKIN
ANN CHORYAN BILBREY
LARRY W. THOMPSON
DOLORES GALLAGHER-THOMPSON

Second Edition

OXFORD
University Press

- 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



EXAMPLES OF WORKBOOK PAGES

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?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Not effective Somewhat effective Very effective



EXAMPLES OF WORKBOOK PAGES

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.



EXAMPLES OF WORKBOOK PAGES

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 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

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Participate in a soothing activity

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Have contact with a person or animal who helps me feel cared for

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Do an activity that I have valued in the past

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat Engage in a spiritual or religious activity

Sun Mon Tue Wed Th F Sat 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

- Freud, S. (1957). Mourning and melancholia. In J. Strachey (Ed.), *The complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (pp. 152–170). London, England: Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1917)
- Galatzer-Levy, I. R., & Bonanno, G. A. (2012). Beyond normality in the study of bereavement: Heterogeneity in depression outcomes following loss in older adults. *Social Science and Medicine*, 74, 1987–1994. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.02.022
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York, NY: Macmillan
- Holland, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2010). An examination of stage theory of grief among individuals bereaved by natural and violent causes: A meaning-oriented contribution. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 61, 103–120.
- Neimeyer, R. A., & Holland, J. M. (2015). *Bereavement in later life: Theory, assessment, and intervention*. In P. A. Lichtenberg, B. T. Mast, B. D. Carpenter, & J. Loebach Wetherell (Eds.), *APA handbooks in psychology®. APA handbook of clinical geropsychology, Vol. 2. Assessment, treatment, and issues of later life* (p. 645–666). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14459-025>
- Steffen, A.M., Dick-Siskin, L., Bilbrey, A., Thompson, L.W., & Gallagher-Thompson, D. (in press). Treating Later-Life Depression: A Cognitive Behavioral Approach. Workbook. 2nd edition. Treatments that Work Series; Oxford University Press.
- Steffen, A.M., Thompson, L., & Gallagher-Thompson, D. (in press). Treating Later-Life Depression: A Cognitive Behavioral Approach. Clinician Guide. 2nd edition. Treatments that Work Series; Oxford University Press.

A photograph of a university campus featuring a large building with a central dome, a modern glass-enclosed walkway, and a pond in the foreground with tall grasses. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text "THANK YOU!" is overlaid in large white letters.

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

UMSL