

FITTING ALL THE PIECES

Central Michigan District Health Department
HIV/AIDS Case Management Program

September 2008

Volume I, Issue 5

COPING WITH DEATH, GRIEF, AND LOSS

What is Grief?

Grief occurs in response to the loss of someone or something. The loss may involve a loved one, a job, or possibly a role (student entering the workplace or employee entering retirement). Anyone can experience grief and loss. It can be sudden or expected; however, individuals are unique in how they experience this event. Grief, itself, is a normal and natural response to loss. There are a variety of ways that individuals respond to loss. Some are healthy coping mechanisms and some may hinder the grieving process. It is important to realize that acknowledging the grief promotes the healing process. Time and support facilitate the grieving process, allowing an opportunity to appropriately mourn this loss.

Common Reactions to Loss:

Individuals experiencing grief from a loss may choose a variety of ways of expressing it. No two people will respond to the same loss in the same way. It is important to note that phases of grief exist; however, they do not depict a specific way to respond to loss. Rather, stages of grief reflect a variety of reactions that may surface as an individual makes sense of how this loss affects them. Experiencing and accepting all feelings remains an important part of the healing process.

Denial, numbness, and shock

- * This serves to protect the individual from experiencing the intensity of the loss.
- * Numbness is a normal reaction to an immediate loss and should not be confused with "lack of caring".
- * Denial and disbelief will diminish as the individual slowly acknowledges the impact of this loss and accompanying feelings.

Bargaining

- * At times, individuals may ruminate about what could have been done to prevent the loss.
- * Individuals can become preoccupied about ways that things could have been better, imagining all the things that will never be.
- * This reaction can provide insight into the impact of the loss; however, if not properly resolved, intense feelings of remorse or guilt may hinder the healing process.

Depression

- * After recognizing the true extent of the loss, some individuals may experience depressive symptoms.
- * Sleep and appetite disturbance, lack of energy and concentration, and crying spells are some typical symptoms.
- * Feelings of loneliness, emptiness, isolation, and self-pity can also surface during this phase, contributing to this reactive depression.
- * For many, this phase must be experienced in order to begin reorganizing one's life.

Taken from The University of Iowa's University Counseling Services Website



Catrina's Corner

Hi Everyone. The summer has flown right by and fall is quickly approaching. It's hard to believe that our program is nearing its 1st birthday...so much has been accomplished. Our clinic is established and growing, support groups are rolling, and our family of clients is growing each day. I feel so lucky to have the opportunity to build this program with you from the start. Even with all these good things happening each day, sometimes it's hard to take pleasure in them because we are engulfed in our own feelings of loss or grief.

Most people automatically think of death when they think of someone dealing with loss, but feelings of loss can be the result of many different events. Many of you may feel that you've lost your health, financial stability, privacy, freedom, or any other number of things. It is normal to grieve these losses just as we may grieve the loss of a loved one. For this reason, I am so thrilled to have a fantastic counselor from Community Mental Health coming to our next two support groups to talk about these issues. Ms. Eiseler is not only a very great counselor, but also extremely knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS. My wish is that each and every one of you will make every effort to attend these next two support groups. Not only will you have access to a wonderful speaker, but you might also meet some friends who are having similar experiences as you. If something is holding you back from attending these groups, please contact me. Maybe we can work out a solution together. I really look forward to seeing you all at the next support group as well your next clinic appointment. Take care!

Clinic Dates

September 19, 2008

9:00am—4:00pm

October 24, 2008

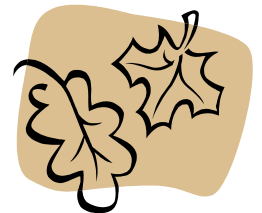
9:00am—4:00pm

November 21, 2008

9:00am—4:00pm

Clinic is located on the
2nd floor of the county
building in Harrison.

Look for the Family
Planning clinic sign



Commitment To Change

Ready.

Willing..

And Able...

Making Health A Priority

MEET THE NUTRITIONIST

If you attended the last clinic you may have noticed a new face. My name is Kati Mora and I am the new HIV/AIDS nutritionist working at the Central Michigan District Health Department. I was recently hired by the agency to provide nutritional support to those attending the monthly clinics in Harrison and hope to be of assistance to all who attend. Each month I will be available for individual consultations where I can answer your questions regarding diet and nutrition. I will also be assessing your nutritional needs and suggesting ways for you to optimize your diet so you can feel your best. Between clinics, I will continue to provide you with nutritional tips through this newsletter where I will discuss nutrition-related topics to encourage you to eat better and stick to your nutritional goals. I will also be available via email at katimora@moranutrition.com if you have any nutrition-related questions or need

assistance in finding recipes, menus, or shopping tips specifically geared towards you.

Now that you know how I hope to assist you, let me tell you a little bit more about me. I graduated in 2006 from Central Michigan University with a degree in Dietetics and I am now pursuing my master's degree in the same field. Over the last four years I have worked as a dietetic technician, nutrition consultant, and dietetic tutor for various organizations within the Central Michigan area and each position has allowed me to work with diverse situations, conditions, and individuals. Though all areas of nutrition interest me, I am currently very interested in HIV-related nutrition therapy which is why I am excited to be a part of the HIV case management team in Harrison. The flexibility of this position also allows me to stay at home with my 1 1/2 year old son, Elijah, and prepare for the arrival of my second

son, Benjamin, who is due in early September. I feel that this job is a great fit and I hope I fit well into your care plan. For more information about me, please feel free to check out my website at <http://moranutrition.com>.

If I have not had the opportunity already, I hope to meet you soon and learn more about you! I look forward to working with everyone and hope to be of great assistance. Remember, I am here for you and want to help you meet your individual nutrition goals. Never hesitate to ask me a question or to make suggestions as I appreciate your input. I'll see you at the next clinic!



continued...COPING WITH DEATH, GRIEF, AND LOSS



Anger

- * This reaction usually occurs when an individual feels helpless and powerless.
- * Anger may result from feeling abandoned, occurring in cases of loss through death.
- * Feelings of resentment may occur toward one's higher power or toward life in general for the injustice of this loss.
- * After an individual acknowledges anger, guilt may

surface due to expressing these negative feelings. Again, these feelings are natural and should be honored to resolve the grief.

Acceptance

- * Time allows the individual an opportunity to resolve the range of feelings that surface.
- * The grieving process supports the individual. That is, healing occurs when the loss becomes integrated into the individual's set of life experiences.
- * Individuals may return to some of the earlier feelings throughout one's lifetime.
- * There is no time limit to the grieving process. Each individual should define one's own healing process.

Factors that may hinder the healing process:

- * Avoidance or minimization of one's emotions.
- * Use of alcohol or drugs to self-medicate.
- * Use of work (overfunction at workplace) to avoid feelings.

Guidelines that may help resolve grief

- * Allow time to experience thoughts and feelings openly to self.
- * Acknowledge and accept all feelings, both positive and negative.
- * Use a journal to document the healing process.
- * Confide in a trusted individual; tell the story of the loss.
- * Express feelings openly. Crying offers a release.
- * Identify any unfinished business and try to come to a resolution.
- * Bereavement groups provide an opportunity to share grief with others who have experienced similar loss.
- * If the healing process becomes too overwhelming, seek professional help.

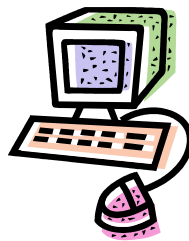
Support Group

- September 15, 2008 Loss and Grief
- October 20, 2008 Loss and Grief...continued
- November 17, 2008 To Be Announced
- December 15, 2008 To Be Announced

Support Group meets 5:30-7:00pm. Call Catrina at 989-539-6731 ext. 8221 for location and directions

Websites

- www.thebody.com
- www.cmdhd.org
- <http://moranutrition.com>



Contact Information

Bay/Arenac Behavioral Health Arenac Center
1000 W. Cedar
Standish, MI 48658
989-846-4573

Community Mental Health for Central Michigan
789 N. Clare Avenue
Harrison, MI 48625
989-539-2141

Community Mental Health for Central Michigan
655 E. Cedar Avenue
Gladwin, MI 48624
989-426-9295

Community Mental Health for Central Michigan
301 South Crapo – Suite 100
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
989-772-5938

Community Mental Health for Central Michigan
4473 South 220th Avenue
Reed City, MI 49677
231-832-2247

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health
2715 S. Townline Rd.
Houghton Lake, MI 48629
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