Pregnancy After Loss

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Learning Objectives

• Things to know: the language of loss and models of understanding and intervening

• A walk in their shoes: Understanding the experience of parents who are pregnant after a loss – their concerns, how they survive, and things to look for

• How can I help? Ways that professionals can support, guide, and assist parents experiencing pregnancy after a loss
Things to Know
The Language of Loss
Definitions

- Anticipatory Grief
- Bereavement
- “Complicated Grief”
- Disenfranchised Grief
- Grief
- Mourning
- Unresolved Grief
History

• Freud
  • *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917)

• Kübler-Ross
  • *On Death and Dying* (1969)
  • Five Stages (DABDA)

• Bowlby
  • Attachment Theory
Modern Models

- Bowlby & Parkes (four Phases)
- Sanders (five Phases)
- Lindemann (anticipatory)
- Rando (6 R’s)
- Worden (4 Tasks)
- Wolfelt (dosing and “companioning”)
How is Grief Experienced

- In the Body
  - Aches and pains
  - Soreness
  - Sleep changes
  - Eating Changes

- In the Mind
  - Concentration
  - Forgetfulness
  - Agitation
  - Fear
  - Anxiety
  - Blaming
How is Grief Experienced Continued

- In the Heart
  - Loneliness
  - Anger
  - Despair
  - Seeking / Searching
  - Withdrawal

- In our Relationships
  - Gender difference in grief
  - The mother vs. the father/partner
  - The father/partner vs. the mother
  - Changes in social activities
Dual Process Model of Bereavement

- Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut (1999)
- Loss-oriented
- Restoration-oriented
Narrative Approaches

- Meaning Reconstruction: Thomas Attig, Robert Neimeyer, Janice Nadeau
- Continuing Bonds: Klass, Silverman, and Nickman
A Walk in Their Shoes
Who are “they”?

- Parents

- Parents who have experienced the loss of a child
  - “Age” of the child who passed (perinatal or child loss)
  - Previous loss history

- “Rainbow Babies”
Bittersweet

- Dual Process Model
- Fear, anxiety, sadness, anger coexist with
- Joy, expectations, love, excitement
- Appendix 1 – CNN article
The “Should”s

- Grief is unique, personal, individual
- Everyone’s got an opinion
- Most “should”s come from reflection of the “should”ers own experiences or fears, an attempt to comfort, or the “should”ers discomfort with seeing pain and sadness
- What can a parent do?
- Appendix 2
- Appendix 3
Our World of Social Media

- Birth announcements
- Pics of the kids
- Pressure on the parent
- Reminders everywhere, all the time
- Intolerance to ongoing grief of perinatal or infant loss
- The Holidays, Birthdays, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, “Year in Review” or most shared status
How Can I Help?
Meet them where they’re at

- Acknowledge the loss

- Model language from parent’s language

- Be patient, kind, understanding, and reassuring
• Be concrete and direct

• Understand how a mother’s trust in her body has been changed – fears, anxieties, and worries that may seem trivial are not to her

• Social Reconstruction
  • Each person’s experience of reality is informed by their personality, prior experiences, and expectations / motivations
• Mindfulness – for the professional

• Mindfulness as a tool to teach

• Never be afraid to engage in appropriate, honest inquiry in the form of, “I don’t know how best to support you or what I can say that would be helpful. Please share with me how I can assist”

• Higher risk for perinatal or postnatal mood or anxiety disorders – know when to refer and to whom

• Dads / partners are at risk too – disenfranchised grief, caregiver’s guilt, and own fears

• Appendix 4
Resources

- Pregnancy After Loss Support (www.pregnancyafterlosssupport.com)
- Baby and Bump has a Pregnancy after Loss specific forum (babyandbump.momtastic.com/pregnancy-after-loss/)
- Still Standing Magazine (stillstandingmag.com/)
- Subsequent Pregnancy After a Loss Support (www.spals.com)
- Reconceiving Loss (reconceivingloss.com/magazine/)
- Compassionate Friends: organization for bereaved parents; not pregnancy after loss specific (www.compassionatefriends.org/)
References and Further Reading Suggestions


• Sanders CM (1989) Grief: the Mourning After, Wiley Series

