

Parallel Sessions - 11:10 and 14:55

1. Prolonged Grief Disorder: What Is It, and How Can I Help?

Steven Millar, Clinical Associate Psychologist, North London NHS Foundation Trust

What is Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)? How does it differ from complicated grief and “normal” grief? Does a diagnosis of PGD run the risk of pathologising a natural response to loss? Who is most likely to be affected by PGD, and why? What interventions are available - how do they work, what are they like, and how effective are they? As a clinician, carer, or someone working with people who may be struggling with prolonged grief, what should I be aware of?

Objectives:

In this session, we'll explore these questions (and more). By the end, you'll hopefully come away with:

- A clear understanding of what Prolonged Grief Disorder is (diagnosis, history, prevalence).
- Insight into effective psychological interventions for PGD (theory, protocols, evidence).
- Practical considerations for working with people affected by PGD.

2. Hospital to Home – a Collaborative Approach to Bereavement Support Following Pregnancy, Baby or Child Loss

Nicola Welsh, CEO, Held In Our Hearts and **Dr Helen Reid**, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Maternity and Neonatal Psychology (MNP), NHS Fife

The loss of a baby during pregnancy or shortly after birth is a deeply traumatic event with lasting impacts on parents' and families' psychosocial wellbeing (Simmons et al., 2006). It is often linked to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which can lead to extended hospital stays, physical discomfort, and reduced ability to manage daily life (Bhat, 2016). Despite this, bereavement care remains an often-overlooked aspect of maternity care. Our innovative opt-out Hospital to Home service delivers a stepped model of care in partnership with NHS maternity and psychological teams, ensuring everyone has access to vital emotional, psychological, and social support. This session will demonstrate how blending NHS clinical expertise with the flexible, person-centred ethos of Held In Our Hearts improves access and continuity in bereavement support. Drawing on case studies and evaluations, we show how this integrated model benefits bereaved parents while easing pressure on NHS services.

Objectives:

At the end of the sessions, participants will

- Better understand why baby and child loss is extra-ordinary.
- Better understand the traumatic impact of baby and child loss.
- Better understand the barriers to accessing and receiving vital support.
- Understand the importance of an opt-out service in reducing inequalities in access to bereavement support.
- Gain knowledge of the referral process and our close working partnership with NHS.
- Gain knowledge of the stepped model of care.
- Understand the importance of community and long-term support.
- Understand the impact of early intervention in bereavement care.

3. Silenced Trauma, Unresolved Loss: Creative Health to Bear Witness to Families of the Missing

Pascale Waschnig, Doctoral Researcher, University of West London

The emotional impact on families of missing people is profound yet often misunderstood or overlooked. Every year, an estimated 170,000 persons are reported missing in the United Kingdom, with long-term psychological and emotional consequences for their loved ones. Despite the high prevalence of grief and trauma, these families frequently do not seek help, owing to a lack of understanding and suitable frameworks among mental health providers.

This study looks at ambiguous loss, moral injury and hermeneutical injustice using art-based and narrative methods.

The aim is threefold: to amplify the voices of those affected, offer creative community-building activities for those affected and to integrate their lived experience into medical, nursing, and psychotherapy education using creative health to increase empathy, recognition, and compassion in care, emphasising the need of therapeutic frameworks that address the unique issues of unresolved loss.

Objectives:

Understanding of:

- Missing people as public health issue.
- Relatives and friends of missing people experience of loss and bereavement.
- Evidence based treatments and research.
- Creative health initiative to improve empathy in medical education.

4. Expanding the Language of Grief: Working with Bereaved Youth with Disabilities

Jennifer Wiles, Director, HEARTplay Program and Camp Erin Boston, Good Shepherd Community Care

This presentation will focus on the impact, challenges and joys that accompany our work supporting young people with disabilities who are grieving. When a young person with a disability experiences the death of someone close to them, it is important to be aware of the unique ways that this loss can affect them. We will focus on essential concepts about disabilities and grief, including managing expectations, the role of caregivers, a neurodiverse approach to grief, and best practices in supporting young people of all abilities and their families who are grieving. We will practice some accessible activities that use the expressive art therapies for neurodiverse young people who are grieving. These activities can be adapted to virtual and in-person spaces and applied to a variety of settings. We will address issues and questions as we strive to create inclusive grief support in our practices and community.

Objectives:

- Identify three unique challenges and responses to the death of a significant person in young people who are neurodiverse who are grieving.
- Implement three responsive activities based on the expressive art therapies for bereaved children/teens of all abilities in both an online and an in-person format.
- Identify and use five tools (program elements) to proactively create a nurturing program environment where participants of all abilities feel respected, informed, connected, and empowered.

5. Pre-bereavement Support for Children and Families in Palliative Care

Jade Finlayson, Child and Families Lead Practitioner, St Columba's Hospice Care

We often hear that children are too young to understand or they need to be protected from difficult conversations however what is the impact of this when they grow up? This session will cover the importance of pre-bereavement support and early intervention when a child or young person has someone in their family who has been diagnosed with an incurable illness.

The session will cover how to explain incurable illness to children and young people as well as ways to include them in choices and decisions. It will highlight the grief reactions that may be displayed by children and young people when they are experiencing a bereavement and how we can support children and young people at the end of someone's life. The session will highlight how other sectors including education and healthcare can support children and young people who are anticipating the death of a loved one.

Objectives:

- To know the language to use when explaining incurable illness to children and young people.
- To know the different ways to support families with children when someone has been diagnosed with an incurable illness.
- To be able to identify grief reactions in children and young people and to know when further support may be required.
- To gain knowledge and confidence around how each sector can support children and young people who are experiencing a bereavement.
- To have knowledge of the grief theories that underpin our practice.
- To be able to provide information to parents and carers on how they can support their children when experiencing a bereavement.
- To have knowledge around how to support children and young people in a palliative care setting as well as at home.

6. The Bereavement Journey®

Dr Roger Greene, Deputy CEO, AtaLoss, **Dean Roberts**, CEO, Parish Trust / Part Time Hospital Chaplain and **Douglas Creighton**, Chaplain, HMS Prison Edinburgh

AtaLoss specialises in:

- Signposting support services and information for bereaved people across the UK.
- Providing the innovative community support programme The Bereavement Journey®.

These services increase bereavement awareness and reduce pressure on clinical staff through early intervention and facilitated community support.

The Bereavement Journey® runs in 400 locations around the UK, including Prisons, Universities and NHS organisations.

Our parallel session evidences the impact of the programme from 3 perspectives:

1. The results of an independent impact evaluation showing participants consistently report remarkable improvements in mental wellbeing, reduced social isolation and improved capacity to cope well with loss.
2. The workforce of an NHS Provider employing 16,000 staff, where the programme helps staff navigate and differentiate the complexities of personal and professional encounters with death and grief, plus the impact on HR policies and managerial practice for staff.
3. Insights from running the programme in HM Prisons Perth and Edinburgh.

Objectives:

- To demonstrate the effectiveness of The Bereavement Journey® programme as a peer-led community development intervention on individuals, communities, organisations and wider society.
- To demonstrate the impact on individuals, communities and wider society of preventive and non-clinical interventions in bereavement support.
- To highlight the availability of comprehensive bereavement support signposting services across the UK.