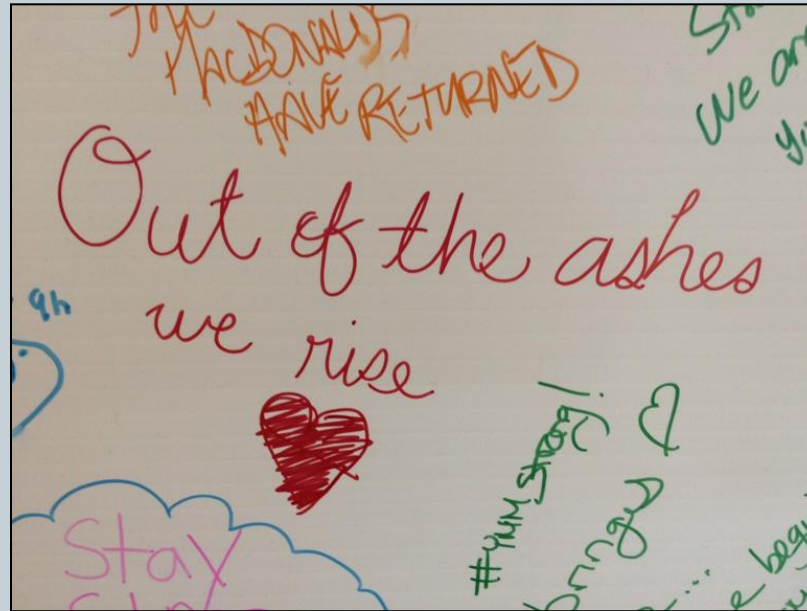


After the Wildfire:



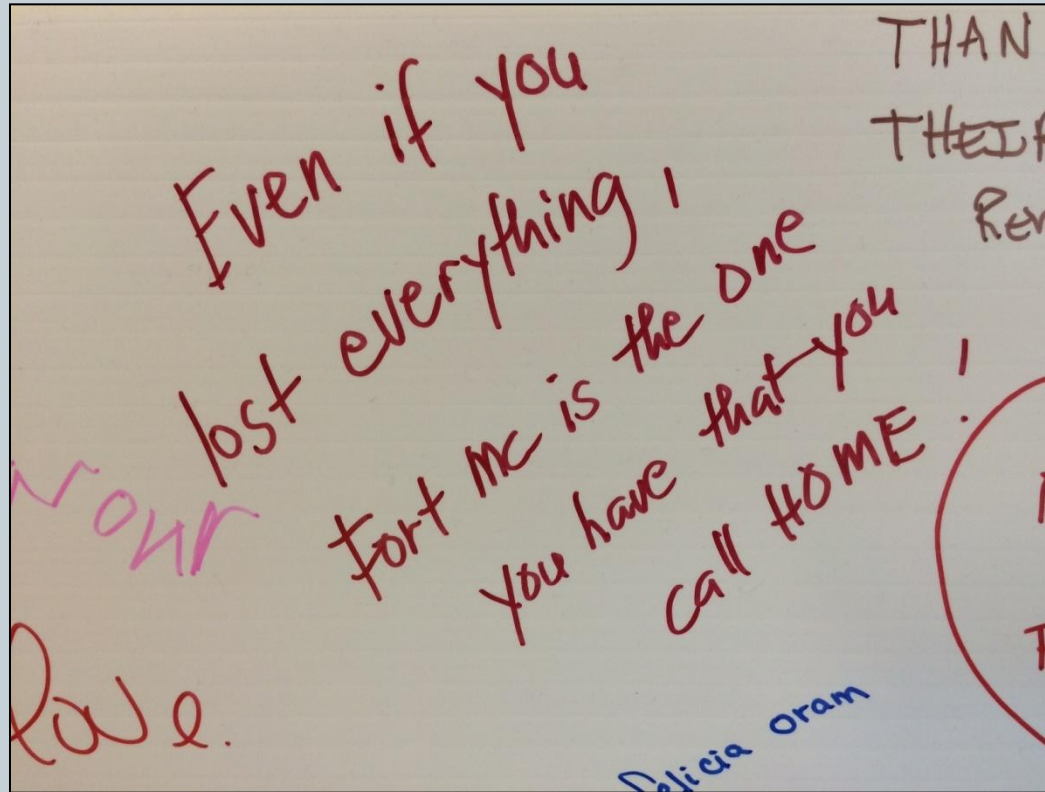
“Loss, Change and Moving Forward”



Facilitator: Brian Pickering

August 2016

After the Wildfire



Presentation Objectives



- Understand some key themes of Grief & Trauma within the Loss Narrative.
- Gain a better understanding of various grief models that help validate and normalize the loss experience.
- Reflection on when to utilize various grief teachings & clinical interventions to better support those seeking assistance.
- Sections include:
 - What is Trauma in Grief
 - Challenges to Grieving: Finding Order in the Chaos
 - Metaphors and Models
 - The Grief Listeners Stance
 - Helpful Interventions
 - Finding Strength and Wisdom in teamwork

Introduction



- What area do you work in, how do you think this information on Loss & Grief will help Personally & Professionally?
- What is one thing you are hoping to get out of this session on Loss, Change and Moving?

“You think you know yourself until things start happening, until you lose the insulation of normality.”

-Robert Wilson 'A Small Death in Lisbon'



“What is Trauma in Grief?”

Trauma – Establishing Order in the Chaos



Trauma in Grief makes an intrusion by its

- Suddenness & Randomness
- Violence and it's consequences
- Unfairness
- Complexity & Disenfranchisement
- Intensity

“Trauma in Grief is marked by a complicated process in which it is difficult to cope and integrate the loss or losses into ones previously held mental, emotional or spiritual framework.”

Trauma – Defined and Normalized



“Trauma refers to experiences or events that by definition are out of the ordinary in terms of their overwhelming nature. They are more than merely stressful- they are also shocking, terrifying, and devastating to the victim, resulting in profoundly upsetting feelings or terror, shame, helplessness and powerlessness.”

(Courtois, 1999)

Sudden and unexpected losses are considered as traumatic grief

A normal response to an abnormal experience

Trauma Impact/Imprint



- **Images/Moments connected to the Fire Experience may present vividly at times**
 - Fire scenes (snapshots or video in your mind)
 - Evacuation experiences (stories)
 - Where you were when you got the news of degree of devastation
 - Your home/responses (then & now)
 - **Creation of a “Trauma Channel”**
- Impact is stronger early on with relief over time
- May be triggered by other events
- Learning skills to **“Look but not Linger.”**

Interaction of Grief and Trauma

Trauma	Grief
RE-EXPERIENCING EVENT, DREAMS	Disbelief, numbness
PRIMARY FOCUS on the traumatic event	Yearning for what was
Somatic experiences	Somatic experiences
Numbing/avoidance	Numbing/avoidance
Diminished interest, restricted affect, DETACHMENT from others	Diminished interest or pleasure, sadness
FEAR, HORROR and FRENETIC ANXIETY	Sadness, anxiety
Impaired concentration	Impaired concentration
Sleep disturbances, irritability	Sleep disturbances, irritability
WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME? CAN IT HAPPEN AGAIN?	How can I go on? Who am I?

Interaction may intensify overlapping symptoms. Traumatic aspects may impact ability to grieve.

Adapted from: Jack Jordan, DWG, Calgary 2007

Calgary Zone Grief Support Program

Remember...



“When it comes to anticipating a person’s reaction, there is only one safe assumption – it is not safe to assume anything.”

How to Break Bad News ‘A guide for Health Care Professionals’
Robert Buckman

“Challenges to Grieving”

Adjusting to Change



Responses to Crisis Events



People may have very different reactions depending on:

- Nature and severity of the event
- Previous experience with distressing events
- Support they have in their life from others
- Physical health
- Personal and family history
- Cultural background and traditions
- Age
- No two people share the same response or timeframe.

Used with permission from *Psychological First Aid* by the Canadian Red Cross

Seven Principles of Human Grief



- **There is No One Right Way to Grieve.**
- **You Cannot Fix or Cure Grief.**
- **There is No Universal Timetable for the Grief Journey.**
- **Every Loss is a Multiple Loss.**
- **Change = Loss = Grief.**
- **We Relive Old Loss While Grieving New Loss.**
- **We Grieve When a Loss Has Occurred or is Threatened**

Jeffreys, J.S. (2011), pgs. 47-49)

GRIEF!



“Grief comes in one size, EXTRA LARGE!! If we tuck it away in the bottom drawer where it never sees the light of day, it remains exactly the same.”

On the other hand, if we wear it, feel it, talk about it and share it with others, it is likely that it will become faded, shrunk, and worn, or it will simply no longer fit.”

“The greatest challenge and gift is to sit with the suffering and not to try and take the pain away.”

Grief Support Program Participant

Grief Perspectives



- Our grief makes others uncomfortable
- Perceived pressure to “get over/move on”
- Coping with insensitive comments
- Comparing our grief to that of others
- Waiting for insurance/financial settlements
- Uncertainty
- We get stuck in the story (can't change the channel)
- Not everyone grieves in the same way

Signs of Concern



- Social withdrawal and loneliness
- Use of alcohol or drugs and other impairing behaviours
- Extreme and sudden change of behaviour
- Continued physical complaints
- Fixation, rumination on the event
- Excessive bitterness or anger
- Numbness/detachment
- Extreme agitation

Adapted from Jeffrey, J.S. (2005) *Helping Grieving People When tears are not enough*: Brunner-Routledge, NY

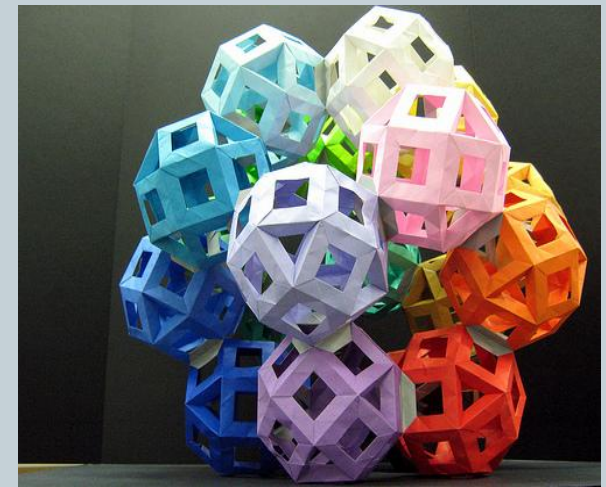
Disenfranchised Grief



A loss that cannot be socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged or publicly mourned.

The griever is not extended a “right to grieve”. Ken Doka

Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing Hidden Sorrow; Lexington Books, 1989



- All losses are important losses.
- What losses have not been validated in your story?

Flood/Fire Losses that can contribute to Disenfranchised grief



Relationships &
Social Connections

Mementoes/Valuables

Independence

Community

Possessions

Landscape

Disruption/Career

Property

Business

Financial Security

Retirement Plans

Recreation Opportunity

Pet/Community

Hopes &
Dreams

Neighbours

Perceived Support

The 'Ongoing' Experience of Grief



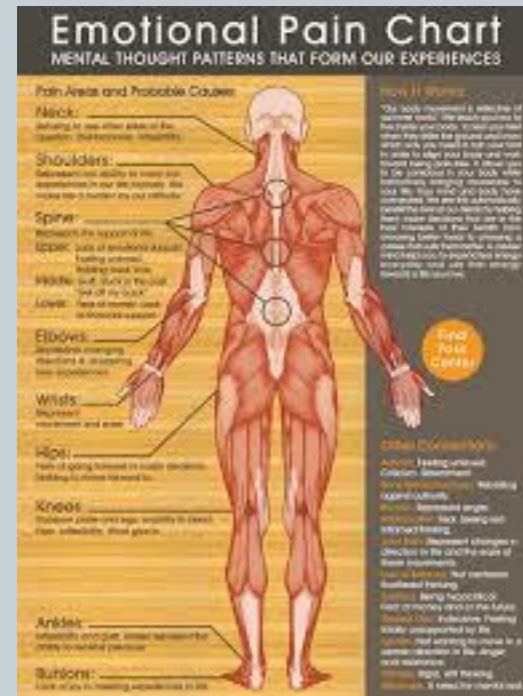
- **Physically**
- **Mentally**
- **Emotionally**
- **Socially**
- **Spiritually**



Physical Health



- Lack of energy (battery is low)
- Sleep and appetite disturbance
- Stomach aches / Nausea
- Chest pain & tightness
- Frequent colds / infections
- Muscle aches and pains



Traumatic Drainage



- A Normal Battery is ++++
- The Alternator keeps it ++++.....
- Grief Drains the Battery - -
- The more trauma the more the drain+-----
- Not abnormal to feel half+-
- Complexities drop it to third
- Complicated = bottom third
- Medications can help hold the charge

Mental Impact



- **Difficulty concentrating & memory loss**
- **Mental fatigue/unmotivated**
- **Shock, denial and disbelief**
- **Confusion and disorientation**
- **Reduced interest**
- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Uncertainty of identity**

Emotional Impact



- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Helplessness, overwhelmed and alone
- Emotional numbness
- Sadness - Despair
- Fear
- Guilt and shame
- Anger/resentment

**“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of it’s sorrows
but only today of its strengths.”**

Charles Spurgeon

The Relevancy of Anger



- Out of the ashes of helplessness, powerlessness and frustration: rises Anger.
- When everything else has been taken away, it can serve to anchor a person in the present. It is what is expressed to try to re-establish some “order in the chaos”.
- Unfortunately anger can be like a virus; it is infectious and can be easily transmitted.
- The goal in dealing with anger, is to validate it’s appearance but to develop some skills to not become personally infected.
- Easy to think about; not so easy to do...
- An “inoculation shot” of understanding anger in grief can help.

Responding to Anger



- It's not about me, it's about the griever
- Be prepared for various grief reactions
- Listen without judging – being “gracious”
- Be present and show that you care.
- Normalize and validate their feelings
- I will accept that I don't have all the answers...

Social Impact



- Isolating oneself
- Feeling disconnected
- Change in relationships and roles
- Inability to function in everyday life and work
- Cocooning: physically tired, cognitively compromised & emotionally uncertain
- Difference between intuitive cocooning (self care?) and isolating (distancing from support)

Spiritual Impact



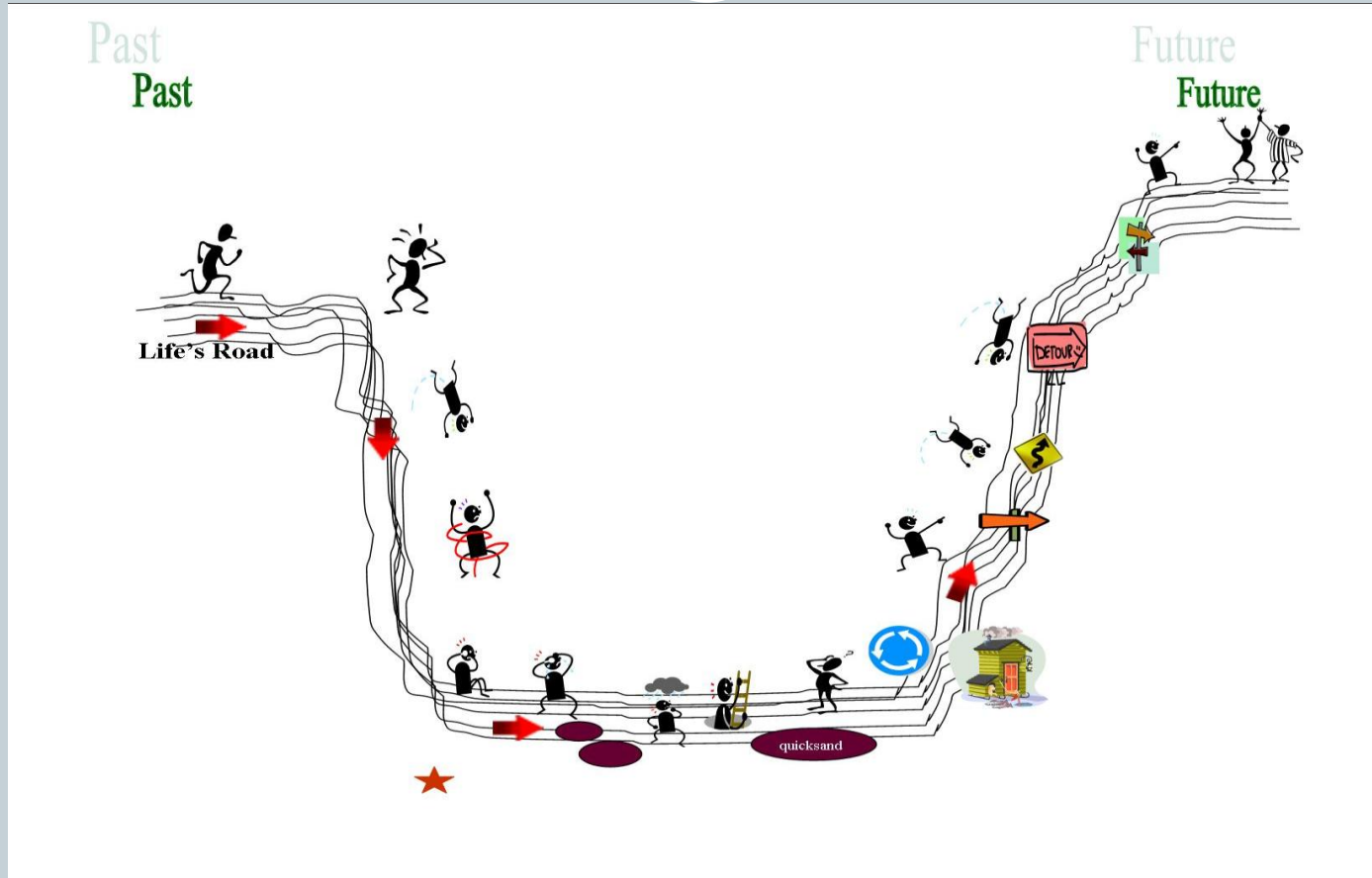
- “My life has changed forever: Now what?”
- Theological assumptions tested:
- Why? Has God abandoned me?
- More/less involvement with faith community
- Other’s pat answers and band aid beliefs do not help
- Loss of meaning and purpose:
Why go on?
“The Valley of Despair”





Metaphors and Models

The Valley of Despair



Sudden losses can increase our distress while at the same time decreasing our ability to cope.

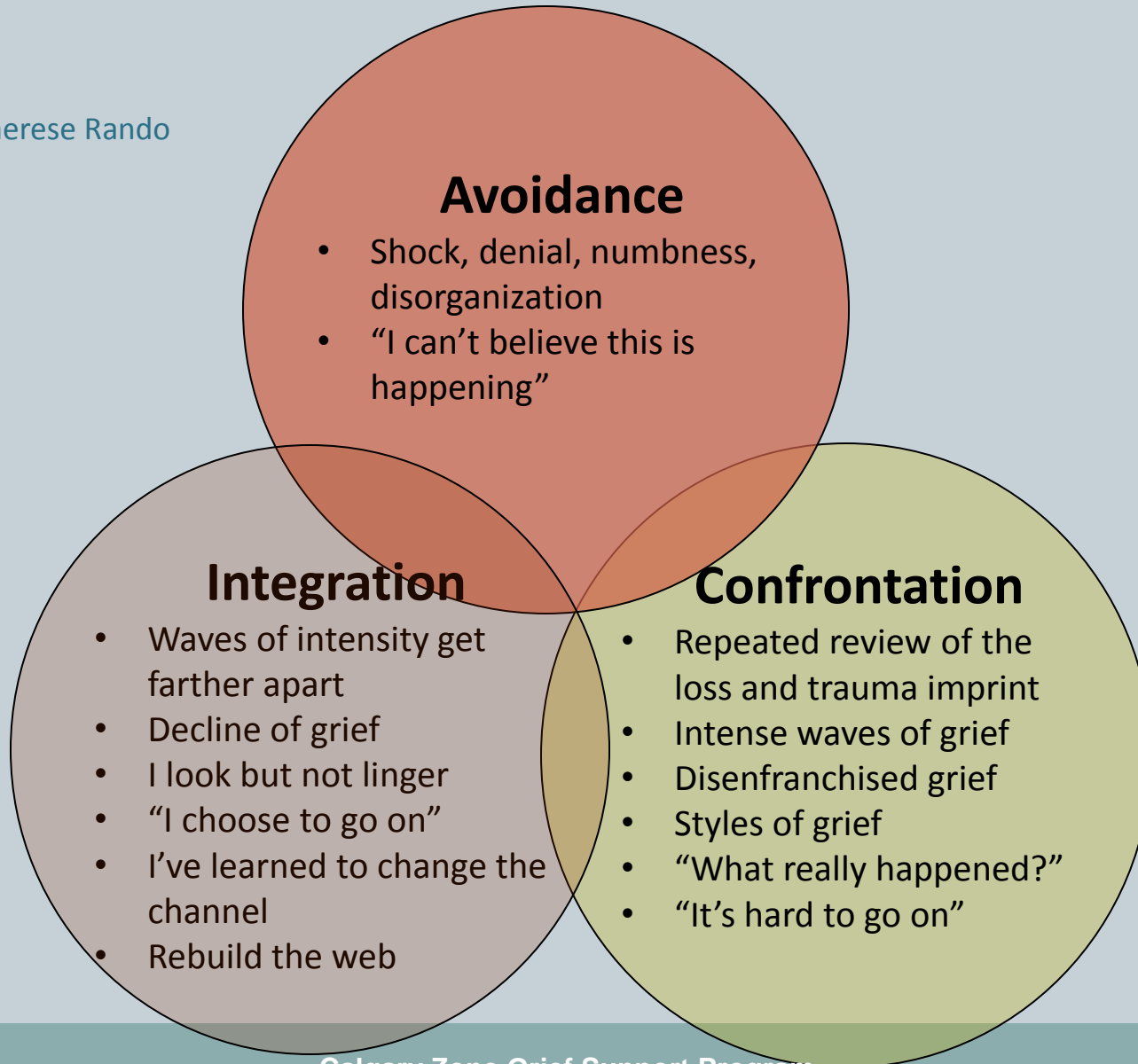
Progressive Changes in Traumatic Bereavement (Rando, 2004)

During Year 1	Around Year 2	After Year 2
High Amounts of Distress	Moderate to low amounts of Distress	Low to no amounts of Distress
No realization of event/death & Implications	Impact realization of event & implications	Realization of impact of event & implications
Shock, little pain because of numbness	No shock – new reality & increase in pain	No shock, decreased pain, no numbness
Little/no coping capacity	Limited coping capacity	Improved/full coping capacity
Much social support	Little/no social support	Little/no social support
Minimal expectations of self as a mourner	Unsuitable expectations of self as a mourner	More appropriate expectations of self
Minimal/moderate distance from event/deceased	Increasingly greater perceived distance from event/deceased	Stabilized perceived distance from event/deceased

Time categorizations are only rough approximations. Many factors can influence actual occurrences.

The Cycles of Grief

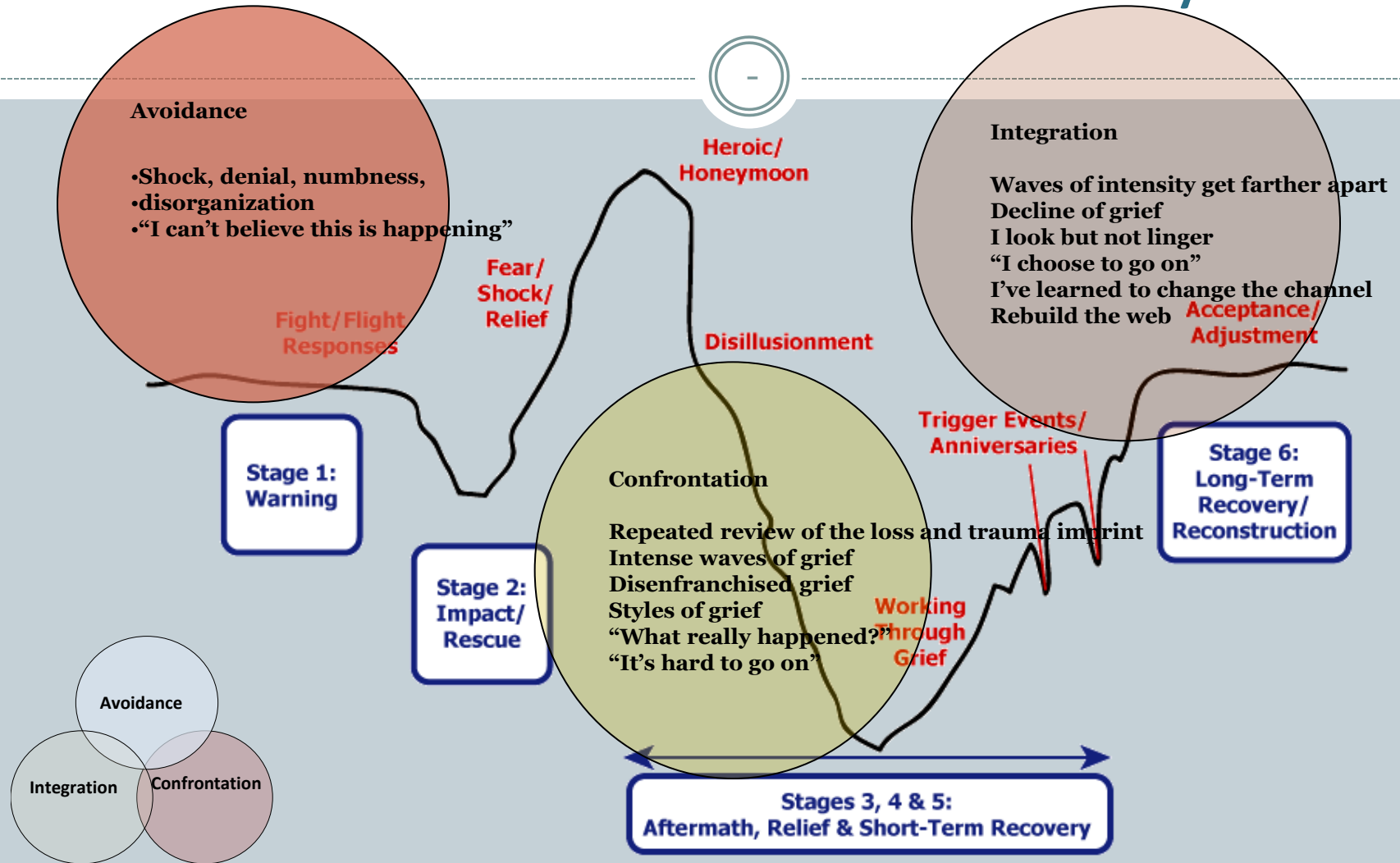
Adapted from Therese Rando



How Individuals and Communities are Affected by Disaster



How Individuals and Communities are Affected by Disaster



Adapted from Terese Rando’s Cycles of Grief

Copyright 2006 by Church World Service, Emergency Response Program, p 3-11, New York, NY <http://www.communityarise.com/classroom.htm>

POST DISASTER ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE – (Model from 2013 Southern Alberta Flood)

The overall vision is for flood funded members to continue to engage flood-affected individuals, families and organizations with psycho-social information, clinical validation and continued flood recovery resources throughout the flood recovery time period.

UTILIZATION OF THERESE RHANDO’S CLINICAL, “3 YR. TRUAMATIC BEREAVEMENT MODEL” FOR TEMPLATE

POST FLOOD “ENGAGEMENT” PSYC-SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS Committee Participants to give input and direction towards the design and implementation of the “Engagement” Initiative through the implementation of 3 Goals as listed below.

AHS Grief Support Program
Samaritans Purse
Canadian Mental Health Association
Foothills Community Immigrant Society
Hull Services
Hearts and Minds
Town of High River – Human Impact Services
AHS – Addiction & Mental Health

GOAL 1

ASSESSMENT OF EMERGING TRENDS & ISSUES RELEVANT TO SPECIFIC FLOOD EFFECTED POPULATIONS?

SOURCES

DOOR-TO-DOOR QUESTIONNAIRE

FRONT LINE EXPERIENCE and INSIGHT TO DATE
(Therapists, Counselors, Involved FTE’s & Flood Related organizations)

GOAL 2

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES TO THOSE IMPACTED (Info & Conversation)

CONTENTS

INCLUSION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & NORMALIZATION OF RELEVANT TRENDS

EDUCATION AND VALIDATION OF CLINICAL GRIEF AND TRAUMA INFO (1ST, 2ND & 3RD YEAR DYNAMICS)

SUPPORTIVE TOOLS, SKILLS TO ENABLE CONTINUED MOVEMENT FORWARD (Resiliency workshop, PFA, etc)

EDUCATION AND CONNECTIONS TO AVAILABLE COMM. RESOURCES (Counseling/Support Continuum in High River)

GOAL 3

OUTREACH COMPONENT

CONTINUED COMMUNITY OUTREACH

OTHER FORMS OF INFORMATION DISEMINATION TO NORMALIZE AND VALIDATE FLOOD RESPONSES

REPRINTING OF THE VARIOUS HANDOUTS ETC DEVELOPED BY THE HIGH RIVER CARES NETWORK OF INVOLVED AGENCIES.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND RELEVANT FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT

Brian Pickering - AHS Grief Support Program: Grief/Trauma Coordinator/Educator – (“ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIR” 2014-2015)

Grief styles ...

Feeling Style

Grief is experienced emotionally

- ☞ Intense feelings
- ☞ Waves of emotions

Grief is expressed emotionally

- ☞ Ventilate emotions, many tears
- ☞ Feelings precede and dominate thinking and doing
- ☞ Primarily sadness, despair, loss

Thinking / Doing Style

Grief is experienced in thinking

- ☞ Trying to make sense
- ☞ Feelings are limited or toned down

Grief is expressed in thinking and doing

- ☞ Focus on problem solving:
Taking care of the estate
- ☞ Thinking and doing precedes and dominates feelings

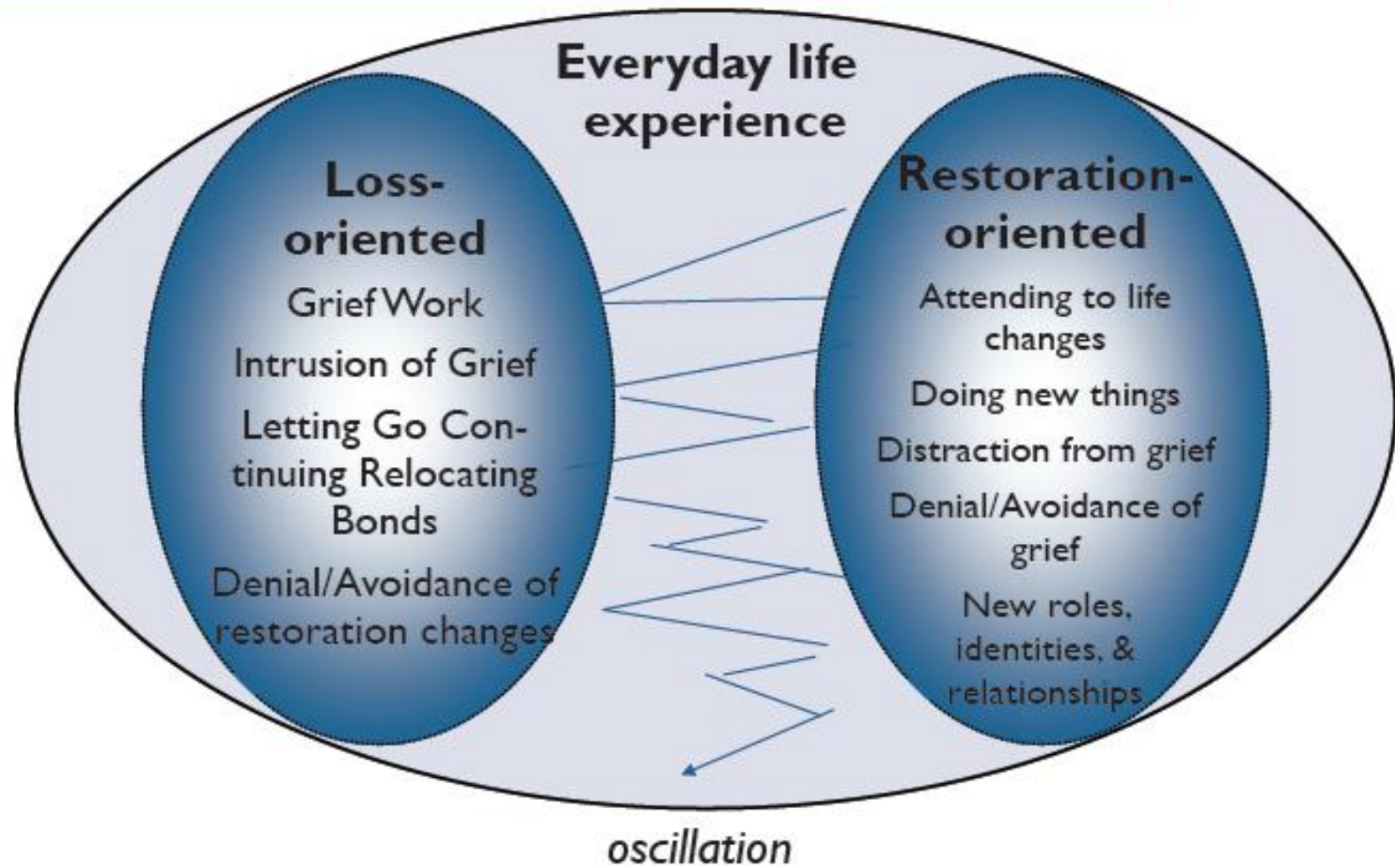


Blended Style

Many people have a blended style of grieving



Dual Process



“The Grief Listener’s Stance”

Keeping it simple!

To present information and an opportunity to explore the impact of the May 2016 Fire.

Model – Mental Health First Aid (Acute Stress Reaction)

1. Understand the *story*
2. Understand the *person*
3. *Validate Normal Responses*
4. What is *helpful/not helpful*
5. Utilize *resources*



“Using a Grief Context can help to bring understanding to our loss experiences and can offer context for Resiliency, Recovery and Healing.”

Relational Positioning

- **Coming along side** safety, trust being attuned, sensitivity, respect, trauma awareness (TIC)
- **Falling in behind** continued connection, patience, empathy, non directive, give space for the process to unfold
- **Continuity of care** as part of the process, inclusion, information, options, choices, guidance, bridging continued support

Relational Conversations

- **Thin conversations** comfortable exchanges with very little insight.
- **Thick conversations** explore and develop “thick” descriptions of situation, circumstance and perspective that reveal the stories of people’s lives, their cherished values, beliefs, purposes, and desires.

The revealing of Embedded Trauma Threads.

Relational Listening

- It's not about me, it's about the griever
- Be prepared for various grief reactions
- Listen without judging
- Be present and show that you care.
- Normalize and validate their feelings
- I will accept that I don't have all the answers...
- Even if I don't know what to say, I know that listening will make a difference
- Facilitate coordination of care according to your role or refer to the appropriate area
- Even if I feel helpless, I can still be present

“Chronos vs. “Kairos” Time

Is an ancient Greek word meaning **the right or opportune moment** (the supreme moment). The ancient Greeks had two words for time, Chronos and Kairos. While the former refers to chronological or sequential time, the latter signifies a time lapse, a moment of indeterminate time in which everything happens. (Wikipedia)

In rhetoric, kairos is a “**passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved.**” E. C. White, *Kaironomia* p. 13

“In short, Kairos dictates that **what is said must be said at the right time.**” Poulakos, John (1983). "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric". *Philosophy and Rhetoric* **16** (1): 35–48.

Self Awareness

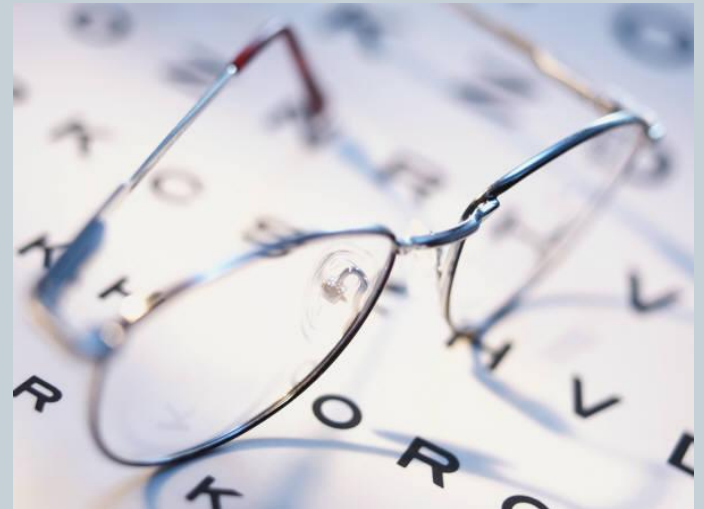


- If when speaking/listening to someone tell their story you can feel yourself reacting either with faster heartbeat, or sweating more than usual, or feeling tearful, it is helpful to slow your breathing down and taking at least two slow deep breaths.
- After you have interacted with a community member that has been affected by the fire/flood, it's a good time to check in with yourself and notice if you are feeling sad, anxious or stressed. If you find that you are reacting know that this is normal. (be mindful of intensity & frequency)

What Helps? Personal & Community Considerations

Re-balancing Our Life

- Reconnection with one's own strengths and abilities
- Requires attention to life's changes and possible new new directions
- Catching up with one's self: reflections, roles and values
- May require development of new skills: re-learn the world
- Requires physical & emotional energy.



Recovery: How Long Will it Take?



- There is no expected time frame
- Grief may take months to be experienced, or be felt immediately
- Grief can be re-activated with new losses
- Grief can be re-experienced at anniversary times
- Significant losses are grieved throughout our lives
- It takes as long as it takes
- Don't expect to have all the answers

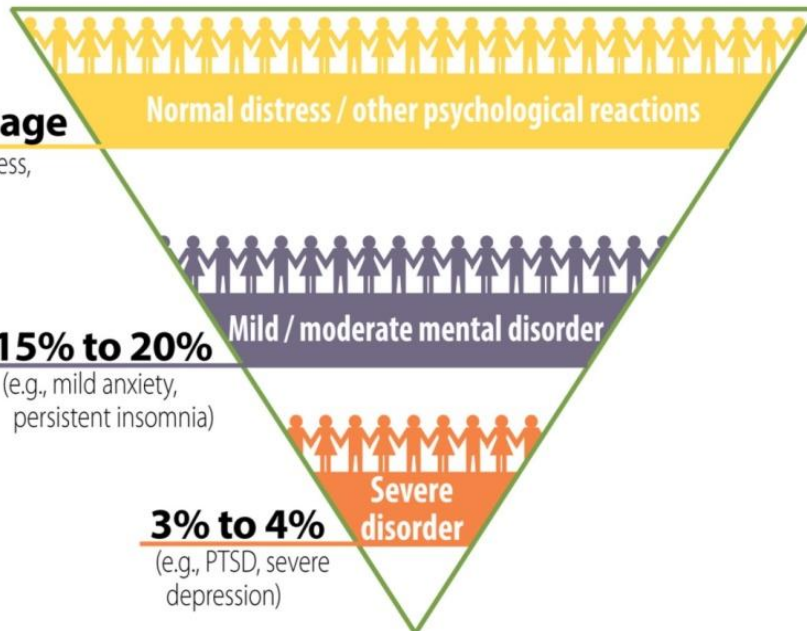
Most People are Resilient!

Many experts conclude that the majority of people are **RESILIENT**



Large percentage

(no disorder, transient stress,
worry, feeling upset)



15% to 20%

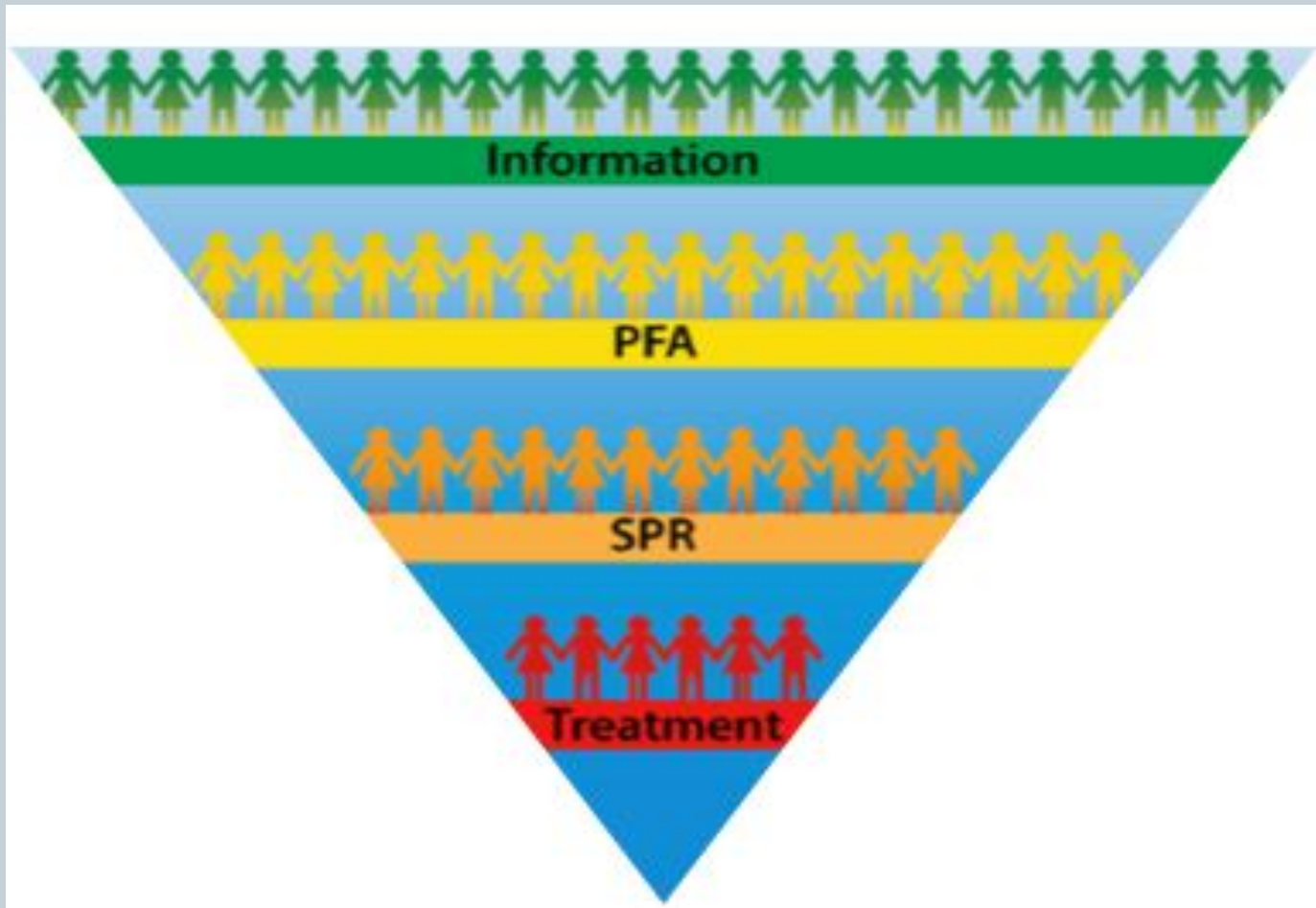
(e.g., mild anxiety,
persistent insomnia)

3% to 4%

(e.g., PTSD, severe
depression)

Adapted from: WHO (2012) & National Research Council (2003)

The Stepped Care Approach to Intervention



Skills for Recovery



- Learning to manage emotions and reactions (knowledge/context)
- Building problem solving skills
- Promoting Helpful thinking
- Engaging in positive activities
- Making and maintaining positive social connections
- Listening to your Intuitive voice



Skills for Psychological Recovery (Field Operations Guide)

Professional Self Care



How do we recognize grief in ourselves and in our team?

- Opportunity to meet as a team and share views, experiences and practices
- Give opportunities to discuss arising issues & participate in a consensus approach to difficult issues
- Develop personal & corporate strategies to help individuals when they are vicariously impacted by clients personal narratives
- Extend knowledge and access to a process of learning

Keeping our Professional Balance



- Being Mindful of our Limitations...
- Being Mindful of the Work you do....It's difficult but necessary.
- Even if I don't know what to say...I know that
- Listening will make a difference.
- Even if I feel helpless, I can still be present.
- I will accept that I don't have all the answers.

The Flood of Complexity after a Natural Disaster



- What we've learned from working in the various impacted flood communities in southern Alberta is that the process of recognizing all that has been lost and re-adjusting to life after this disaster takes more time than most individuals, families and communities expected.
- Utilizing a larger time frame to work through our losses acknowledges that, for some, rebalancing and rebuilding is still in process. With individual differences in coping mechanisms, trauma histories, and personal resiliency, the three-year time frame acknowledges that for some, the return to a more familiar level of functioning may take more time than expected and the need for an “expanded” recovery period is essential. Even though three years for recovery may surprise some people, it also would not be unreasonable to look at an even longer recovery period of five, seven or even a ten-year period depending on the complexities that may have arisen.

The Flood of Complexity after a Natural Disaster

Con't.



- For many who are now finding themselves in this “expanded” recovery time frame, continued physical, cognitive, emotional (stress/anxiety/anger etc.), social and spiritual struggles may still be experienced. For many, these responses can feel abnormal and surprisingly still have a powerful impact on those trying to move on from this catastrophic event and think about their future. For those still dealing with some of these reactions, it can be quite a relief to realize that these ongoing struggles are a normal and frequently reported reaction by many in Southern Alberta.
- For those who feel they are back on their feet again, these consideration may serve as an invitation to offer greater compassion and understanding to those who continue to need support, time to process, or who continue to struggle with the ongoing impact of the flood.

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