Grieving with Love **Inizznam**

Grief Research by Sarah Cheney, MS, Columbia School of Social Work Poster Design by Xena Cortez, Michigan Technological University

Let's Talk About Grief & Death

Grieving the death of loved ones is not only painful, but can also feel lonely and confusing. And it's often difficult for friends and family to see people they love suffering in grief, which is why community grief support—counseling and support groups—is essential to the wellbeing of communities.

Grieving is unique because it is both a public and private experience that has powerful, transformative potential for personal growth. ACT with its prosocial focus is the perfect place for talking about strengthsbased and innovative approaches to our mortality.

Rather than turning away from death and grief because of sadness and fear, let's talk about ways to turn toward grief with love and compassion. If we're willing, we have much to learn from grief.

Researching Grief

What effects will ACT have on grief experiences after a community grief workshop?

How is psychological flexibility related to grieving?

Participants

22 community members seeking grief support attended 2-hour grief workshop, 20 women and 2 men, age range 20-75 years

Methods

- Pre & post-workshop Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II)
- Grief workshop intervention
- Open-ended questions for random sample of participants

Results

- Paired t-test showed no statistically significant differences.
- Pre-test mean = 18.64 Post-test mean = 18.29
- t-test: SD = 1.216 p-value = 0.292 $CI = (-0.345 \ 1.059) \ d = 0.176$

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What support do grieving people want from the community?

Acceptance & **Present-Moment**

Willingness to have all grief emotions

Curiosity about grief here & now

Plan coping skills for distress

Hold grief lightly--it's important

Notice fears and avoidance of grief's pain

Grief is more than sadness

We grieve because we love.

Contemporary grief concepts illustrated by ACT hexaflex processes. FIGURE

Grief Workshop Intervention

Two-hour workshop at hospice using combination of ACT and modified Complicated Grief Therapy strategies:



Sharing stories of death and grieving

Psychoeducation about contemporary grief: debunking grief stages myth, connecting love to grief with attachment theory

ACT experiential exercises: clipboard, holding grief lightly cone



Discussion about compassion: how do we offer ourselves compassion and what compassion have we received from others

Guided meditation to end workshop

Sponsor: ACBS Social Work Special Interest Group Advisor: Dr. Steven Schinke of Columbia's School of Social Work **Contact:** Sarah Cheney, MS, Columbia School of Social Work, sarah.cheney@columbia.edu

Defusion

Mindfully, actively grieve each day Set grief aside for daily lite Take care of loved ones who died

Self-Compassion

Notice self-judgement about grieving Reward self for difficult grief work

Learning to live with loss takes time

Research Limitations

- anonymity
- avoidance
- Lack of ACT & grief studies affected research design & implementation

What's Next

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Values & Love

Practice continuing bonds of love

Revisit values & restore sense of purpose

Adaptation to loss can be powerful & satisfying

Action

Small sample (N=22) affected statistical and practical significance Sample pairing affected by design errors in questionnaire

Need measures for grief emotions, coping, and grief-related

AAQ-II might be an ineffective grief measure

Learning more about using ACT in grief support groups • Focusing on qualitative research to learn from individuals Investigating psychological flexibility and grief relationship Keep the grief conversation going in my community!