Holiday Blues and the Grieving Process

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Holiday Blues-Causes

- Loss (relationships, ambiance, normalcy/expectations)
- Firsts—Changes/without
- Memories
- Loneliness
Causes, Cont…

- Business
- Financial Pressures
- Expectations
- Seasonal Affective Disorder/Light lacking luster
General Tips of Coping…

- Stay Nourished (Hydrate; Sleep; Move)
- Stay Connected with Others (vs. Loneliness)
- Reminisce (reflect, look through)
- Honor Yourself and Others (Pace, Gratitude, Let In, Extend Out; Get Help)

http://www.today.com/video/today/40089326#40089326
Left Brain/Right Brain

- Logical
- Literal
- Linguistic
- Linear: I LOVE LISTS!!

- Right Brain Loves LOVE!: (Children)
- Emotional
- Experiential
- Nonverbal
- Autobiographical

Horizontal Integration

- Two hemispheres connected by the corpus callosum.
- Integration of these sides is needed to live a balanced, meaningful, and creative life.
- Why? Each side has specific functions enabling us to achieve more specific goals and complicated tasks.

Emotional Desert to Emotional Flood

Connect-Redirect

“Attunement”: Joining with the side of the brain expressed.

Connecting to the Right Hemisphere:
- Acknowledge feelings
- Employ nurturing nonverbals

Connecting to the Left Hemisphere:
- Give logical explanation
- Planning/structuring
- Putting experience into words
- Putting details in order


“Can’t teach a child to swim when they’re downing” (Landreth, 2012)
Name it to Tame it

- Bringing the left hemisphere on-line so understanding of the emotional flooding can happen. “Making sense of what has happened”
- Retelling the story of a scary, painful, or difficult experience.
- Put words to the experience and put the details in order
- Revisiting the emotions

Vertical Integration

- Building a staircase to the lower and upper levels of the brain.
- Lower levels = primitive
- Higher levels = sophisticated
- Vertically Integrated: refers to the upstairs monitoring the downstairs and the downstairs making contributions to the upstairs

Diencephalon and Brainstem

- Lower areas of the brain
- Controls vegetative and automatic functioning (body activities that sustain life): hunger, blood pressure, breathing, circulation, temperature, movement, territorial instinct, flight/flight response
- Activates instinctive behavior (survival)
Limbic System

- Emotional triggering that need the neocortex for managing the emotional output
- Helps control Fight or Flight
- Rage
- Fear
- Separation Distress
- Caring
- Nurturing
- Playfulness
- Exploration
- Social bonding
- Delight
- Lust (older)

Reference: Badenoch, 2008
Neocortex

- Frontal lobe; higher brain; Executive Function Center
- 85% of total brain mass
- Effected by parenting.
- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Reasoning
- Reflection
- Empathy
- Self-awareness
- Unfinished at birth…little connections
- 90% of growth occurs in the first 5 years
Vertical Integration

- VI leads to:
  - Sounds decision making and planning
  - Control over emotions and body
  - Self-understanding
  - Empathy
  - Morality

- Expectations?: Upstairs isn’t fully established until mid-20’s (remodeling in adolescence)

Vertical Integration, Cont..

- Trapped downstairs
- Amygdala (processes and expresses emotions)
- Latching the “Babygate” (tantrums: conscious or unconscious).
- “Engage Don’t Enrage” (p. 49)
- What can you do to regulate yourself in working with Families?

Phases (In general)

- Early Grief (shock/numbing; Alarm; denial)
- Acute Grief (yearning and pining; searching; strong feelings; disorganization; despair; reorganization)
- Integration of Loss and Grief (continuation of reorganization)
“Grief is an expression of our love for the dear one who has died and it deserves as much respect as joy and happiness”

Alan Wolfelt
Important Distinction!

- **Grief:** Feelings and thoughts internally experienced when a loss occurs.

- **Mourning:** Outwardly expressing the internal experience of grief.
Grief Reaction Depends on...

- Temperament
- Life Experiences
- Nature of Death
- Caretakers
- Tandem Experiences
- Peripheral Support
Pervasive Considerations

- Be honest!
- Give small amounts of info to small children (etc.)
- Give further information based on questions
- Give choices in the grief process
- Remember to encourage families to drink water for hydration.
- Grief is an individualized process
- Encourage family to be a good grief model
- Holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays can be difficult.
Pervasive Considerations

- Grief is an individualized process
- Encourage family to be a good grief model
- Holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays can be difficult.
- Know when to seek professional help
Developmental Information

- Cognitive
- Play
- Linguistic
- Psychosocial
- Gender Identity
- Fears
Cognitive Development

- Sensorimotor Phase: 0-2
- Preoperational Phase: ~2-7
- Concrete Operational Phase: ~7-11
- Formal Operational Phase: ~11 on
- Postformal Operational Reasoning-Late Adolescent-Adulthood
Sensorimotor Phase (0-2)

- Egocentric
- Basic Concreteness
- Sensory-Motor
- Imitation
Communication Considerations

- Voice Tone Emphasis
- Facial Expression Changes
- Physical Communication
- Eye-contact Establishment
- Few Words
- Repetition
Communication Considerations

- Avoid Euphemisms: Can lead to Confusion
- Listen with your Eyes!
- Allow Children to be apart of the Funeral
- Remember:
  Predictability = Security = Safety
Preoperational Stage…

- Symbolic Function
- Deferred Imitation
- Inability to Seriate
- Inability to Classify
- Appearance and Reality
- Inability to Conserve
- Centering
Preoperational (2-7)

- Irreversible Thinking
- Egocentrism
- Artificialism
- Animism
- Projective/Symbolic Expression
- Egocentric Speech
Preoperational Cont...

- Irreversible Thinking
- Egocentrism
- Artificialism
- Animism
Concrete Operational Stage

- Conservation
- Ability to Classify
- Ability to Seriate
- Ability to Reverse Operations
- Inability to Use Abstractions
Concrete Operational Stage

- More Complex Thinking Skills (e.g., Conservation, Classify, Seriate)
- Ability to Reverse Operations
- STILL Inability to Use Abstractions
- Games with Rules; Projective with Directive
- Socialized Speech
Communication Considerations

- Still Concrete!
- Avoid a lot of WHY questions!
- Still focus on nonverbals
- Reflective Listening-IMPORTANT!
- Cause and Effect (choice-giving!)
- Consistent Messages
Formal Operations Stage

- Combinational Logic
- Separating the Real for the Possible
- Using Abstractions
- Hypothetical-deductive Reasoning
Communication Considerations:

- Choice-giving
- Persist if Ignored
- Joint Problem Solving
- Reflection more Casual
- Essential Timing
- Careful Disclosure
- Empathy!
Communication Considerations

- Physical Development does not equal Emotional Development
- Watch Big Man/Woman Syndrome
- Need Encouragement to Experience Emotionally (watch coping mechanisms)
- Don’t Assume Teen Perceives Support
- Peer Support Groups helpful
Seeking Professional Help

- Complicated Grief
- Externalizing Symptoms (Aggression, Conduct Issues, Prolonged Tantrums, etc.)
- Internalizing Symptoms (Depression, Anxiety, Psychosomatic Complaints)
- School Issues (Academic Failure, Withdrawal from Activities)
Seeking Professional Help, Cont...

- Risk Taking Behaviors (Fighting, Sexual Experimentation, Alcohol/Drug Use)
- Physical Regulation (Sleeping, Eating, Hygiene changes)
- Denying Pain (Acting Overly Mature)