The Many Faces of Childbirth Loss: Helping Families Heal

Andrea Werner Insoft, LICSW
Fredda Zuckerman, LICSW

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When a parent dies, you lose your past.
When a child dies, you lose your future.
Overview

- Evolution of Care
- Types of Loss
- Role of Social Work
- Continuation vs Termination
- Grief
- Trauma
- Healing
- Next Steps
- Self Care
Evolution of Care

- Terminology
- How Management of Losses Has Changed and Evolved
- Minimization $\rightarrow$ Recognition
- Current Trends of Care
- Challenges for Inpatient and Outpatient Providers
Types of Pregnancy Loss

- Abortion
- Early Miscarriage
- Ectopic Pregnancy
- Late Loss
- Twin Death
- Still Birth
- Neonatal Death
- Selective Reduction
- Termination
Role of the Social worker in Outpatient Setting

- Part of health care team
- Helping with the decision making process
- Acknowledge
- Explore
- Reflect
- Educate
- Support
- Bear Witness
Prediagnostic Testing: The Good News and The Bad News

- Early Diagnosis
- Early Identification
- Opportunity to Gather Information
- Unknown Prognosis
- Burden of Choice
Decision Making: The Burden of Choice

After Tiller

https://youtu.be/xf3rETO062s
After Tiller

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Termination of Pregnancy: Types of Intervention

- Medical Abortion
- D & E
- Saline Induction
- Selective Reduction
Continuation of Pregnancy
Process for people with losses other than termination

- Early Loss
- Late Loss
- Twin Death
- Stillbirth
- Neonatal Death
Role of therapist: Other Pregnancy Losses

- Acknowledge
- Explore
- Reflect
- Educate
- Support
- Bear Witness
Companioning

• Alan Wolfelt
• Beyond the medical model
• ~com – with
• ~pane – bread
• Literally breaking bread with someone
Grief Process

• Instrumental Grievers
• Intuitive Grievers
• Guilt
• Anger
• Fear
• Anxiety
• Self Esteem
PTSD

• Not all wounds are visible
• Triune Brain
• Thinking – frontal lobe
• Limbic system activates – amygdala
• Brain stem responds—either speed up or shut down
• DSM Diagnosis
Healing

• Individual Therapy
• Couples’ Therapy
• Support Groups
• On-line support
• Social Media

THE BEST SIGN OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IS NO SIGN OF IT ON FACEBOOK.
Other Avenues for Healing

• Acupuncture
• EMDR or Sensorimotor psychotherapy to address trauma
• Donating Breast Milk
• Donating to hospital
• Setting up a fund
• Find knowledgeable providers
• Funerals/Rituals
Call The Midwife
Support Groups

• Goals
• Five Week Mode
• Major Issues
• Group Ritual
• Pros and Cons of Group
Next Steps

The reserved mother
She has experienced
the unimaginable
and yet she is still
ABLE TO WALK
Implications for Future Pregnancies

• Information gathering
• Decision making
• Capacity for dealing with anxiety
• Developing support network
• Complicated process of grieving while pregnant
• Duality of attaching while mourning
• Potential for
  • PPD
  • Attachment issues
  • Relief → joy or Sadness
Self Care

• Breathe...
• Personal Loss History
• Know your limits
• Know when to ask for help
• Reserve judgment of your self and the patient
• Allow enough time
• You don’t need to have all the answers
• Separate work from home
• Expect that you will make mistakes
THANK YOU

Listening is hearing with thoughtful attention.

Don’t try to be too wise; don’t always try to search for something profound to say. You don’t have to do or say anything to make things better. Just be there as fully as you can.
References


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