

Application of ART with Complicated Grief

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Complicated Grief













Presentation Objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics of and factors contributing to a complicated grieving process
2. Recognize and identify the benefits of treating complicated grief with ART
3. Identify and apply ART interventions for the treatment of complicated grief

Complicated Grief

- Difficulty accepting the death and assimilating into life without the deceased (Shear, 2010).
- Psychological problems, anxiety, depression, cognitive impairment and PTSD
- Intense longing, loneliness, emptiness, lack of meaning in life, reoccurring thoughts of joining the deceased and intrusive thoughts of the deceased that interfere with functioning.
- There may be guilt over the death, constant replaying of circumstances of the death in their mind and imagining that they could have prevented the death.
- Feeling shocked, numb or in disbelief over the death.

Contributing Factors

- Relational factors: the closer the relationship to the deceased increases the likelihood of developing PCG, with parents and spouses being particularly vulnerable
- Personality and Coping Style: Individuals with poorer coping strategies, anxiety, insecurity, lower self-esteem and higher levels of negative cognitions
- Level of worry and anxiety along with attachment style
- Protective factors are spiritual and religious practices or rituals, prior adaptive, psychological well-being, personal and financial control with no co-occurring losses.

ART Conceptualization of Grief

- ART is an evidence based therapy for the treatment of PTSD and Depression
- ART includes the core components of trauma treatment, image rescripting, voluntary image replacement, guided visualization with eye movements, desensitization, processing of distressing memories.
- ART is easily adapted to the treatment of Complicated Grief
- Through ART, we can positively modify mental imagery associated with the traumatic and distressing experiences that are directly or indirectly associated with the loss into a new normal. As they are processed through ART, the memories and images become less intrusive and decrease in distress or are no longer distressing. These memories become integrated with more positive memories and images, a process called memory reconsolidation which helps with the acceptance of the loss.

Application of ART Interventions

- Basic Protocol: process death or loss, any traumatic scenes
- Scene Match: earlier scenes in the client's life contributing to ongoing distress regarding current loss
- Little Liar: The little liar may be the voice that tells the client they have to focus on the negative part of their loss.
- Support Self: The positive voice that defends the part of the person that wants to do healthy actions
- Gestalt: unfinished business with loved one. Saying good bye is important, offer the opportunity to have closure by saying good bye.
- Metaphors/Metaphorical Moment : Helps with decision making, feeling stuck, acceptance and heightened emotions
- Socratic Method: asking the client "what do you think your loved one wants for you? How do they want you to remember them or how do they want you to live your life now that they are gone?
- Permission Slip .. gives client permission to move on, be happy, get married again, have more children, etc..
- Elevator/Stairway to heaven or wherever they believe their loved one is… purgatory, hell
- Souvenir..client takes something from the session which may be a positive reminder of their loved one.
- Slide Show
- Letter
- Pull back the Curtain

ART Intervention: Basic Protocol

- Process death/loss, traumatic scenes
- Goal is to replace negative images/replace with positive images related to the grief scene/person, place or thing
- Gestalt and Little Liar/Support Self are frequently used
- Process sensations and scene two times
- May process a third time if very emotional
- Be cautious when giving suggestions with the Director Scene. Suggesting a loss did not occur is generally not a good choice. Suggestions regarding unfinished business and saying good-bye may be appropriate
- Transfer, Outprocessing and Target Trigger Times
- Finish with Bridge and/or Fountain

ART Intervention: Scene Match

Earlier scenes in the client's life contributing to ongoing distress regarding current loss





ART Intervention: Little Liar/Support Self

The little liar may be the voice that tells the client they have to focus on the negative part of their loss.

Support Self is the positive voice that defends the part of the person that wants to do healthy actions





ART Intervention: Metaphor

Helps with decision making, feeling stuck, acceptance and heightened emotions

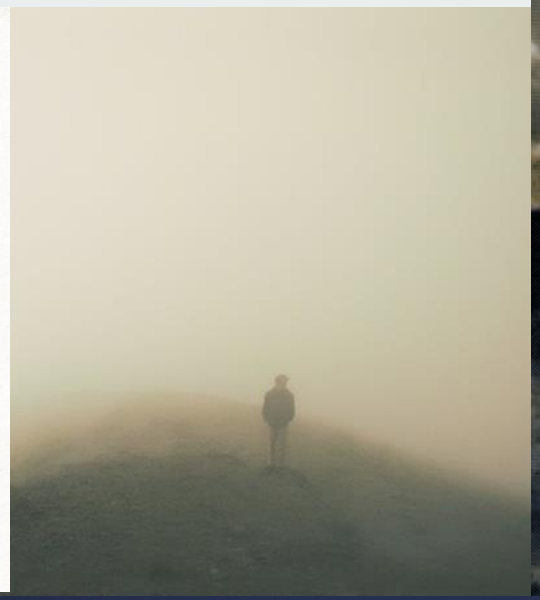
Cloud hanging over my head, I'm in a fog

I'm in a dark hole/pit, There's no way out

I'm falling apart/torn up inside/broken heart

Puddle of tears, ghost of myself









Art Intervention: Stairway/Elevator to Heaven

Or wherever they believe their loved one is…







ART Intervention: Permission Slip

.. gives client permission to move on, be happy, get married again, have more children, etc..

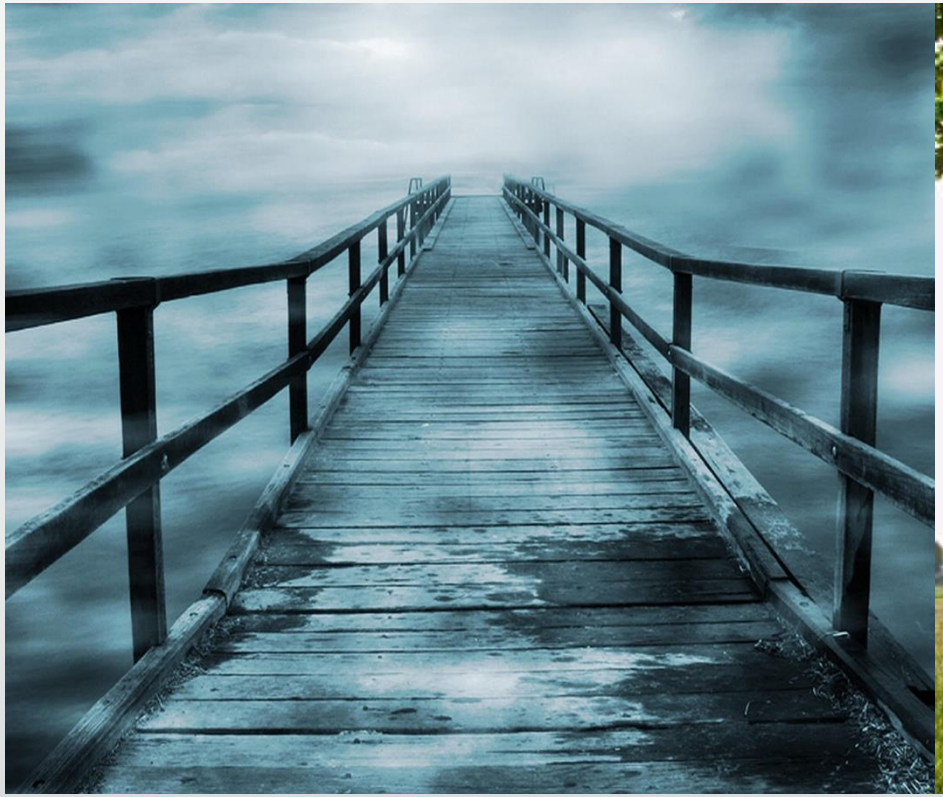


ART Client:





ART Client





Resolution of Complicated Grief through ART





Appendix

- Reference supplementary materials and resources