COPING WITH LOSS  
SWK 6702  
FALL 2011  

** ADDITIONAL READINGS WILL BE ASSIGNED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR  

COURSE DESCRIPTION  
Coping with Loss is an elective for students in either their foundation or advanced year. Loss is a pervasive phenomenon throughout the life cycle. The course is designed to explore aspects of social work practice with clients experiencing loss and grief in a variety of situations. The course builds on psychosocial theories of human development as well as the work of internationally recognized experts in grief and bereavement.  

Since society generally associates grief with death, grief that accompanies life events such as separation from home (child welfare), divorce, immigration, retirement, homelessness or chronic illness, is frequently not addressed by clients or professionals. As with all human processes, the grieving processes are intertwined with each individual's place in their life span, their strengths, vulnerabilities, cultural orientations, values and resources.  

Knowledge and skills concerning loss, grief and bereavement have been evolving in the helping professions rapidly in the last 30 years. Social work has contributed considerably to this evolution.  

The focus of this course is to provide a theoretical base for understanding and addressing the psychosocial aspects of loss, death and bereavement. The use of contemporary knowledge for strengthening the coping skills of grieving individuals, families or groups is emphasized. Areas of study include skills of assessment and treatment which are explored using films and personal and case materials. Strategies and interventions in working with a culturally diverse array of vulnerable populations confronting loss, for whom services and programs need to be planned, are highlighted. The ethical dilemmas and social policy of “disenfranchised grief” associated with abortion, AIDS, suicide and physician-assisted suicide, are also explored. The losses of soldiers, veterans, their families and communities involved in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan will also be reviewed using evolving literature and guest speakers.  

LEARNING OBJECTIVES  
Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate:  

1. A beginning knowledge of the major theories, frameworks and models of grief process used in social work practice;
2. The ability to identify potential loss events occurring through the life cycle, including non-death situations;

3. An increased understanding of the potential physical and psychosocial consequences of loss;

4. An increased awareness of the impact of individual difference, diversity and gender in relation to dying, loss and grief

5. An increased awareness of their own personal losses and a willingness to explore the impact of these losses on their ability to help clients coping with similar losses and fears.

6. A beginning ability to intervene in situations impacting psychosocial functioning which involve past, current, or impending loss.

7. Increased knowledge of resources (supportive and educational) available to individuals and families confronting or coping with loss events;

8. The ability to bridge knowledge about loss with all other social work knowledge, including research, policy and methods of practice.

9. Professional awareness of the responsibilities and responses to ethical dilemmas confronted when helping people cope with loss.

10. Familiarity with inequities in access to essential health, mental health and bereavement services.

11. Understanding of value conflicts and cultural differences which often accompany end if life decisions.

**PLAGIARISM**

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

**HIPAA ALERT**

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain
other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including
diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the
case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Given the nature of classroom discussion and the presentation of case materials and at times personal
revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients
extends to classmates. What is shared in class stays in class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented
disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability
Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf
Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for
accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office
immediately.

E-RES (Electronic Reserve)
Most of the articles mentioned in the curriculum are available on electronic reserve [E-RES]. You
can access the full text articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

How do I Use E-RES?

1. Go to the library’s online resources page:
   [http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp]

2. Click on E-RES. If you are off-campus, at this point you will be prompted for your Off
   Campus Access Service login and password.

3. Click on “Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor's name,
department, course name, course number, document title, or document author. [all
   Foundations courses will be listed under Beder, the sequence chair]

4. Click on the link to your course.

5. Enter the password given to you by your instructor.

6. Locate and click on the item you wish to view. Titles beginning with "A", "An", or "The"
   are alphabetized under "A" and "T" respectively.

7. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it
to disk.

To view documents that are in pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat
Reader software. You can download it FREE at
[www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html]
TEXT

REQUIRED TEXTS:


RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment I (due 5th class session.)
The student is asked to consider a situation involving a personal loss or a client's loss through death or termination (e.g. breakup of a relationship, loss of employment, or immigration).

Identify and discuss the major emotional components of this loss. What factors influenced the reactions of the grieving individual/family?

Identify the influences of diversity and culture on the experience.

Explain and explore the grief process as it unfolded. What major theories of loss help to explain the experience and the emotional components of the loss?

This paper is to be written in APA format using relevant texts and journal articles. It is expected that the theoretical frameworks in the Rando readings as well as the Webb and Worden readings will frame the discussion. At least three sources are to be used in the preparation of this paper.

Addresses course objectives 1, 2, 4, 5 7.

Assignment II
In this final paper, students are asked to develop a programmatic social work intervention, which will
help clients cope with loss. Using case material, or students' personal experiences, as appropriate, a particular category of loss will be explored, i.e. bereavement of widows, parents who have lost children, survivors of violence or natural disasters, loss through a specific illness or disability, retirement or divorce.

How normally is this loss experienced? Are there cultural, gender or diversity influences? What is the professional caregiver role in this situation? What knowledge is needed to design appropriate, culturally sensitive interventions?

What theories influence the intervention strategies? What modality of support would you choose for this intervention? Individual, family or group work? Give reasons for your choice.

What supports would you look for in the life space of the grieving individual?

This is a research paper and is to be written using APA format. At least five sources are to be cited for this paper.

Addresses course objectives 1-9.

**GRADING CRITERIA**
There will be two written assignments during the semester.

Classroom attendance and participation will be factored into the overall grade. Written assignments will constitute 75% of the grade. Class participation will constitute 25%.

The following criteria will be used for grading: completeness of the assignment; clarity of thought and communication; correctness of the language; ability to apply course content and readings to the assignments; appropriateness and fullness of documentation; evidence of interest in learning from the written assignments and classroom discussions.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE: PERSONAL AWARENESS, DEFINING LOSS AND COPING** (Objectives: 2,5,8.)

**Required Readings**

**Suggested Readings:**


**SESSION 2: LOSSES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE: AN OVERVIEW -- INFLUENCES OF CULTURE AND DIVERSITY** (Objectives 1-9)

**Required Readings:**

**Suggested Readings:**


SESSION 3: THE GRIEF PROCESS (Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 7)

Required Readings:
Chapter 4: Unresolved grief, pp. 59-73.

Suggested Readings


SESSION 4: THEORIES OF GRIEF AND LOSS: FRAMEWORKS AND MODELS

FACTORS INFLUENCING REACTIONS TO LOSS (Objectives 1, 2,3)

Required Readings:

**Suggested Readings:**


**SESSION 5: AFTER DEATH RITUALS; FUNERALS AND AFTERCARE**
(Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6)

**Required Reading**

**Suggested Reading**


**SESSION 6: CHRONIC AND TERMINAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITY: ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF GRIEF.** (Objectives 2-9)

**Required Readings:**


following hip-fracture: A risk factor and target to increase resilience in elderly people “
Social Work Research. 23(30) 187-196.

Suggested Reading:


**SESSION 7: END OF LIFE ISSUES: THE HOSPICE MOVEMENT -- ADVANCE DIRECTIVES & PALLIATIVE CARE.** (Objectives 1,2,3,9)

Required Readings


*Happ, M.B., Capezuti, E., Strumpf, N., Wagner, L., Cunningham, S., Evans, L., Maislin, G.,


Suggested Readings


*High, D.M. (1994). Surrogate decision making: Who will make decisions for me when I can't?" Clinics in Geriatric Medicine, 10(3), 445-462.


SESSION 8: TERMINATION AS LOSS: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES, THERAPY, ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT GROUPS. (Objectives 1-8)

Required Readings


Suggested Readings


**SESSION 9: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**
( Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6)

**Required Reading**


SESSION 10: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: COPING WITH CHANGES IN THE FAMILY.

Required readings:


Suggested Reading:


SESSION 11: COPING WITH LOSS ASSOCIATED WITH AIDS  (Objectives 2-9)


Beckerman, N.L. (1994). Psychosocial tasks facing parents whose adult child has AIDS. Family
Therapy, 21(3), 209-216.


**SESSION 12: DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN COPING WITH LOSS: ABORTION, SUICIDE, PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE, EUTHANASIA, ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE.** (Objectives 4-9)

Required Readings:


Suggested readings:

Emanuel, E.J. (1994). Euthanasia: Historical, Ethical and Empiric Perspectives Archives of Internal Medicine, 154, 1890-1901.


SESSION 13: CARE-GIVER CONCERNS (Objectives, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Required Reading:


Suggested Reading:


Hospice Foundation of America.


ADDENDUM TO COPING WITH LOSS BIBLIOGRAPHY


Heath, K. (1990) Relationship of hope, coping styles, con and current losses and setting to grief resolution in the elderly widow (er), Research on Nursing and Health., 13, 109-117


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*****ADDITIONAL REFERENCES WILL BE HANDED OUT IN CLASS.