



Anticipatory Grief:

Help Clients Face Impending Loss and Uncertain Futures

Erica H. Serrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT

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Erica H. Sirrine, Ph.D., LCSW, FT, is a licensed clinical social worker, qualified clinical supervisor and the dean of the School of Social Work at Southeastern University. She has over 17 years of experience in the field of death, dying and bereavement and has been awarded the distinction of Fellow in Thanatology by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. She has conducted and published research on the continuing bonds maintained by survivors following a death, and she recently authored and published *Sammy's Story*, an anticipatory grief counseling book for young children experiencing the serious illness of a loved one.

Dr. Sirrine has extensive expertise providing individual and group therapy to bereaved children, adolescents, adults and families. She has implemented numerous interventions and programs aimed at improving the emotional health of clients experiencing loss. Dr. Sirrine presents seminars on bereavement and loss throughout the United States and is known for her interactive and engaging workshops. She has been distinguished as "Professor of the Year" and the National Association of Social Workers Heartland, Florida Unit's "Social Worker of the Year."

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Materials that are included in this course may include interventions and modalities that are beyond the authorized practice of mental health professionals. As a licensed professional, you are responsible for reviewing the scope of practice, including activities that are defined in law as beyond the boundaries of practice in accordance with and in compliance with your professions standards.

Grief Summit 2021: Anticipatory Grief- Helping Clients Cope in the Face of Impending Loss and Uncertain Futures

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Anticipatory Grief

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“Stages of Death and Dying” (DABDA)

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Sustained Hope in Anticipatory Grief

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Anticipatory Grief Emotions

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Common Anticipatory Grief Reactions

Regressive Behaviors

Magical Thinking

Disbelief/Confusion

Difficulty Concentrating/Forgetfulness

Change in school work/grades

Sadness/Depression

Mood Changes

Anger/Protest

Acting out/Aggressive behavior

Guilt/Regret

Fear/Anxiety

Helplessness

Faith/Spirituality Questions

Isolation/Loneliness

“Grief Bursts”

Physical Symptoms (stomach/headaches, etc.)

Sleep Problems/Disturbances

Lethargy/Fatigue

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The Pandemic's Impact on Grief

Increased Isolation

Fewer Opportunities for Face-to-Face Support

Support System is Now Coping with their Own Losses

Disguised/Masked Grief

Loss of Funeral/Memorialization Rituals

Loss of Control

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Continuing Bonds

Sigmund Freud's Grief Work Theory

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory

Physical vs. Emotional Attachment

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Anticipatory Grief Interventions

Before the Death

Anticipatory Grief Counseling- Case Example: "Heather"

Provide Death Education and Practical Support

Linking Objects

Legacy Journals/Letters/Video

Video Diaries/Life Review

Anticipatory Grief Retreats and Hope@Home Groups

Inheritance of Hope

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Anticipatory Grief Interventions

After the Death

- Attend Funeral/Memorial Service
- Condolence Calls/Letters/Flowers
- Prepare Children and Adults to Return to School/Work
- Prepare Children to Attend Funeral/Memorial Service

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Talking to Kids about Terminal Illness

Do's and Dont's

Do:

- Be honest, clear, and direct
- Normalize feelings of anticipatory grief
- Model healthy mourning behaviors and coping skills
- Use concrete terms when discussing illness and death
- Foster an environment encouraging open and honest dialogue about the impending death
- Provide a caring and supportive environment
- Provide opportunities for memorialization/funeral rituals

Don't:

- Lie or conceal the reality
- Avoid the subject
- Use platitudes or euphemisms

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Explaining the Dying Process to Children

Identify a trustworthy adult to be present

Be honest and encourage questions

Prepare children in advance about medical equipment/devices/personnel in the room

Discuss the body's process of dying

Allow continued communication with person who is ill (per developmental age)

Emphasize that hearing remains until the end

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Preparing Kids for Funerals and Memorials

Educate about Funeral Ritual (Who, What, When, Where, Why)

Discuss Expected Emotions/Grief Reactions of Adults

Explain Body Disposition/Viewing Expectations

Prepare Activities for Younger Children- Case Example: "Poster Boards, Pictures, and Memories"

Allow Children/Teens to Participate in Planning

Identify a Supportive Adult

Never Force a Child to Attend

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Preparing for Return to School

Notify Caregivers of Death

Teachers, guidance counselors, principal, extracurricular activity directors, and coaches

Educate Caregivers about Death

Expected and normal grief reactions

Classroom/schoolwork/homework needs

Identification of "safe" support person and place

Prepare fellow students

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Preparing for Return to School/Work

Provide Psycho-education for Successful Reintegration

Management of grief waves and reactions

Emotional time-outs

Cognitive/concentration difficulties

Preparation for questioning by others

Possible feelings of isolation (feeling ignored)

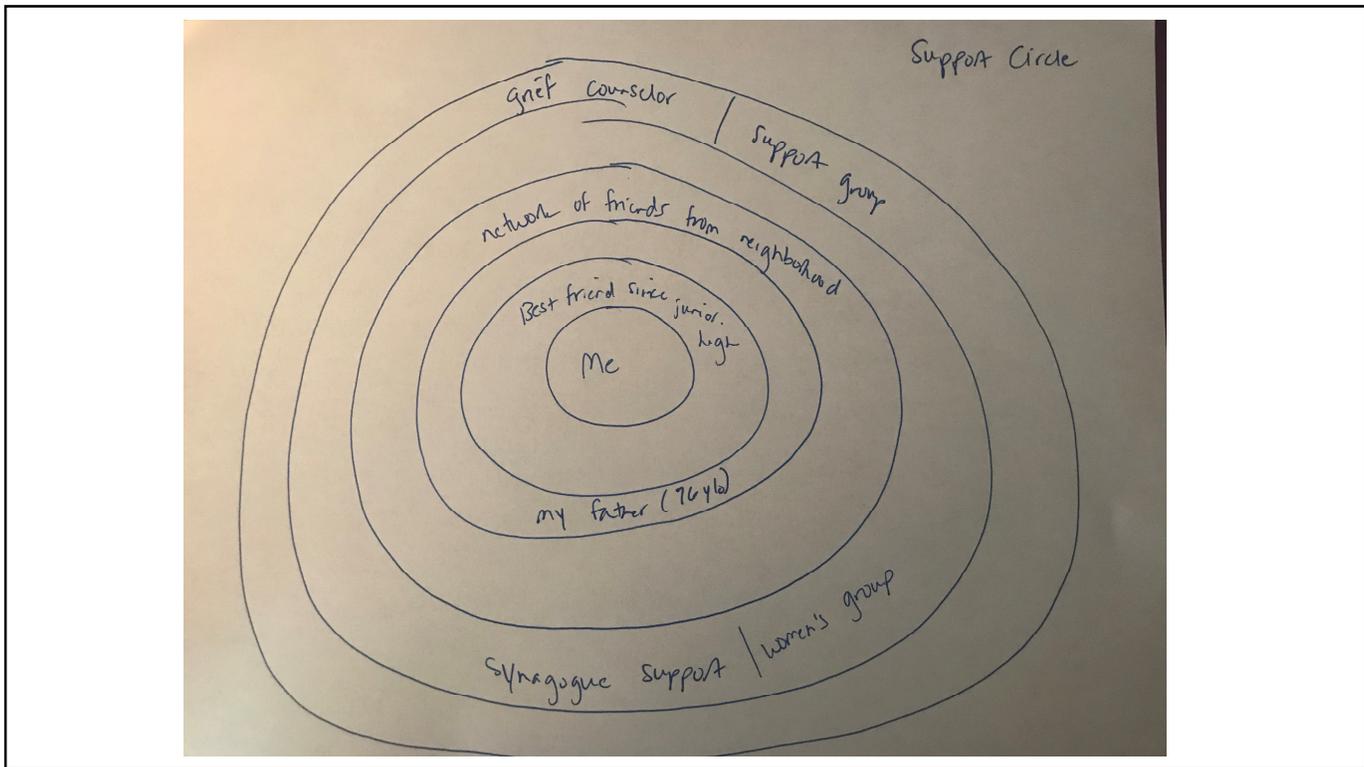
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Identifying Sources of Support

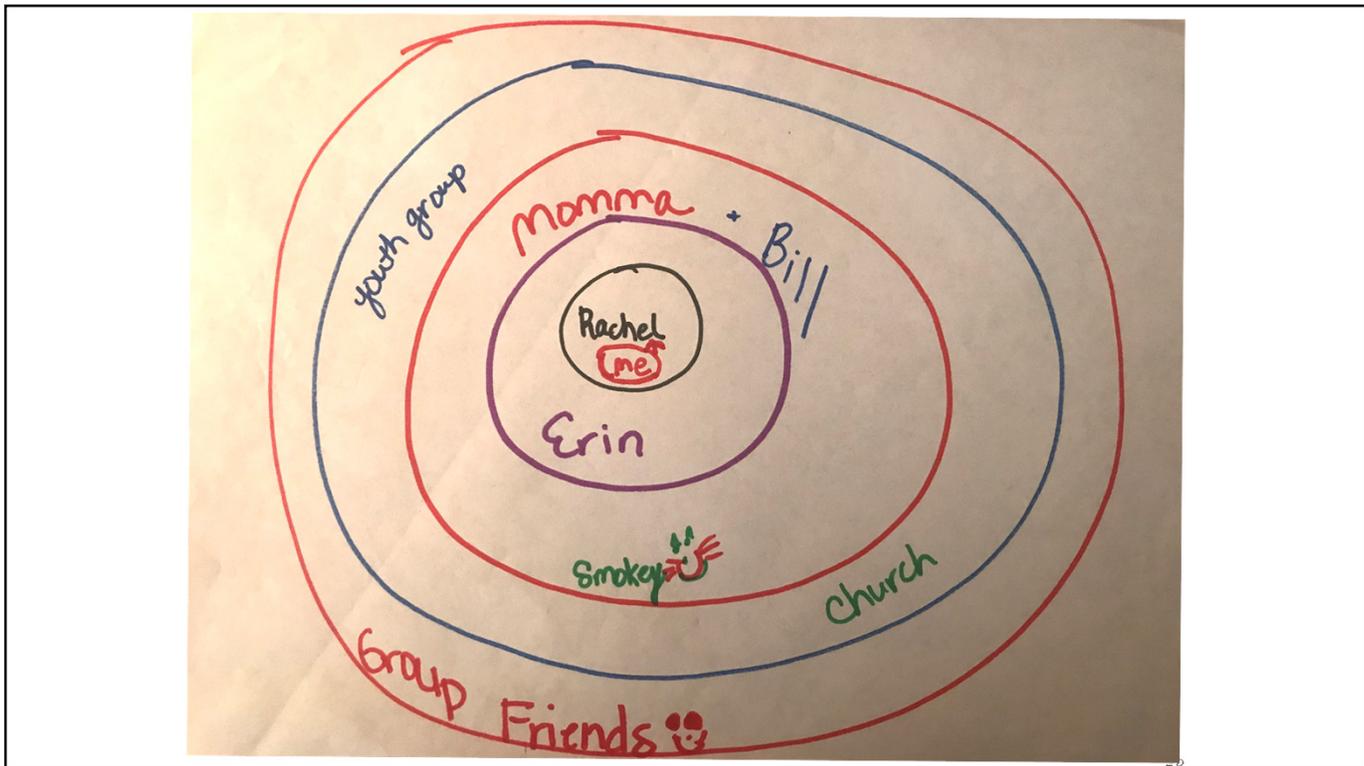
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Activity: Circle of Support

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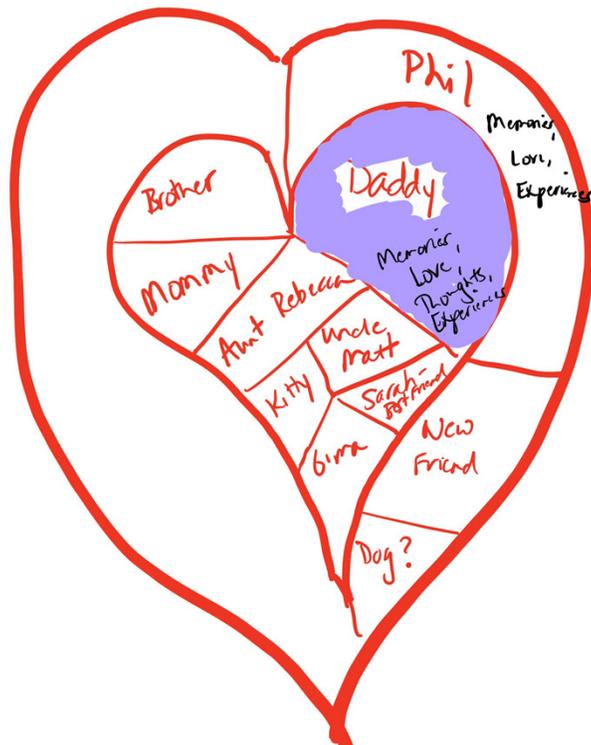
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Love after Loss: An Illustration

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Hope and Healing Amid Anticipatory Grief

“Truly it is in darkness that one finds the light, so when we are in sorrow, then this light is nearest of all to us.”

-Meister Eckhart

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Questions?
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Grief Summit 2021- References
Erica Sirrine

Anticipatory Grief

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