

Impact of Death on the Caregiver

“With training and support we find that repeated griefs, far from undermining our humanity and care, enable us to cope more confidently and more sensitively with each succeeding loss.”

-Parkes

1. Each death reminds us of our own past losses

-is the loss similar?

-is the death not resolved?

-pulls up the sensations and memories, much like attending a wedding can pull up memories of our own wedding

2. Each death reminds us of our fear of future losses

-apprehension about the death of a parent, child, partner, sibling, etc

3. Each death arouses awareness of our own eventual death

-always rumbles below the surface

-is the person similar to us in any way? Age? Sex? Personality?

-part of development is death transcendence

-deal with death by history taking, picture taking, creative works

4. Feelings can arise during caregiving

-feelings are not wrong, we are not less loving for having them

-ignoring these feelings will not make them go away

-trying to suppress these feelings can make us ill, physically or emotionally

Internal stress: try not to blame self if person you are caring for is cranky, depressed, hostile; watch the “shoulds,” “oughts,” “I can do it alls”

External stress: Change what you can change; if it cannot be changed, save your energy; You may not be able to make the person happy-separate needs from wants

5. Feelings can arise at the time of death

GUILT-did I do the best I could? Did I do everything possible?

SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS-may doubt your self-confidence, may experience low self-esteem

ANGER-at the person for dying, at God, at self for getting involved in caregiving, at others for not helping you cope

6. As caregivers we enter the helping relationship as a sort of ministry

Our own needs are met when we feel we have given to others;

When they die, we are hit hard-we may even experience feelings of abandonment.

7. Death brings a re-evaluation of one's own value system

-awareness of death gives significance to life

-we live more authentically

-we gain a sense of perspective

-focus on what really matters

-we re-evaluate our use of time

-we embrace possibilities

-we reassess priorities

8. Experiencing the death calls us to feel the loss and do Active Grieving