

Navigating Loss, Loneliness, and Aging: **RECONNECTING TO SOURCES OF STRENGTH**

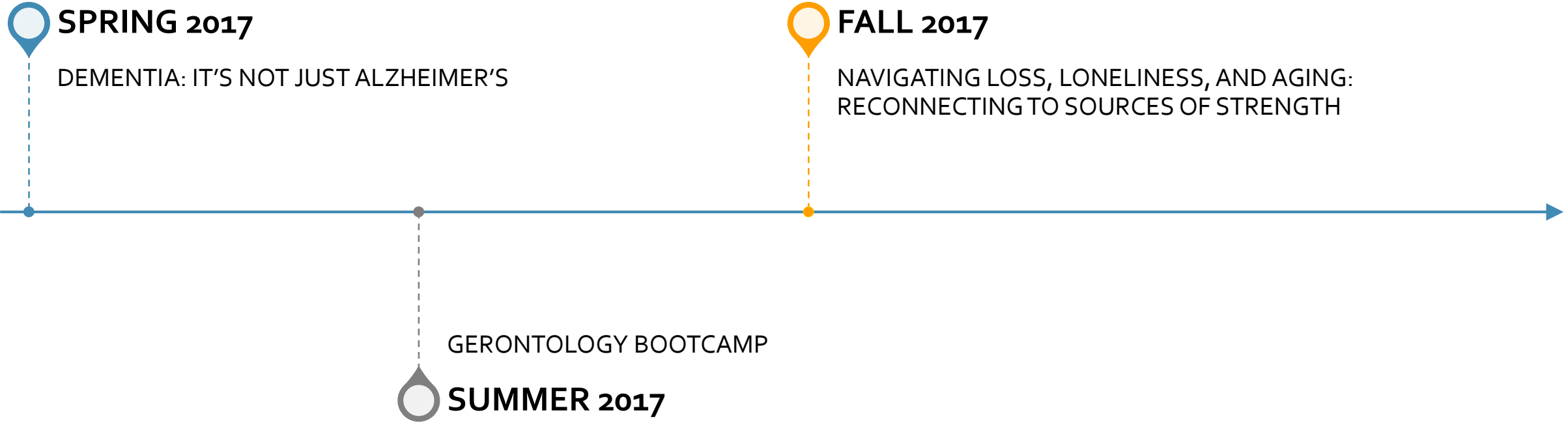
PART 2 – GRIEF AND THE NEW NORMAL

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THREE SERIES





VCU Department of Gerontology

<http://www.sahp.vcu.edu/departments/gerontology/>



Virginia Department for Social Services

www.dss.virginia.gov/

A PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVERS WORKING IN ADULT DAY CARE SETTINGS

A FOUR-PART WEBINAR SERIES

1

Part I: Loss

2

Part II: Grief &
the
"New Normal"

3

Part III:
Loss & the
Professional
Caregiver

4

Part IV:
Social
Connectedness

At the end of this series, YOU will have an increased understanding of:

the difference
between **grief** and
loss

the areas of life
that loss can
impact

how to work
towards a "**new
normal**"

activities and
resources for
navigating loss

person-centered
care as it relates to
loss

the importance of
self-care for the
professional

the relationship
between **loss,**
loneliness, and
social isolation

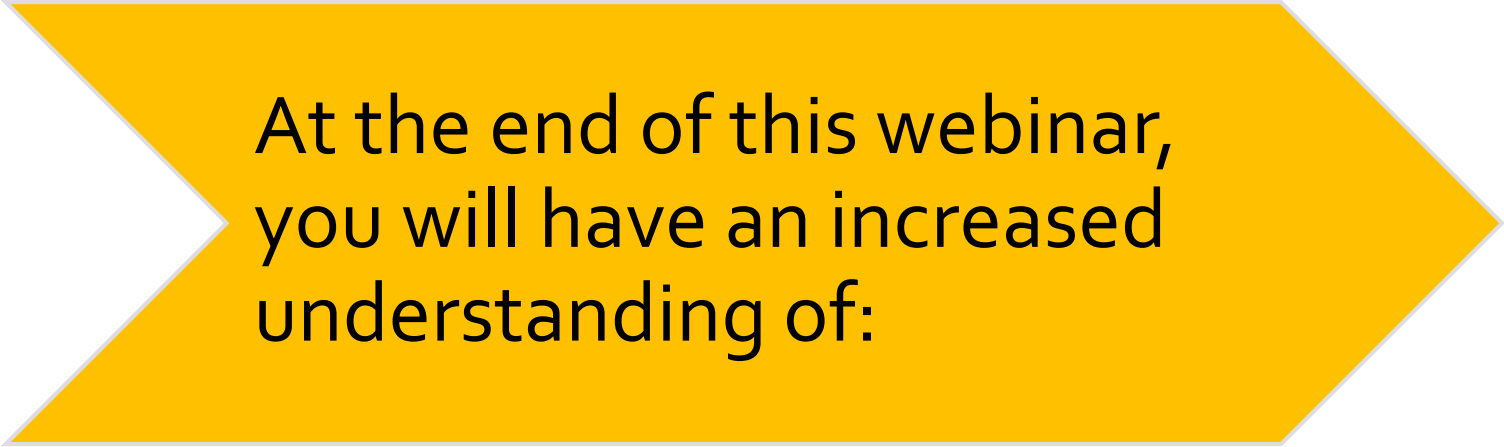
risk factors for
loneliness and
social isolation

the **health
consequences** of
loneliness and
social isolation

how loneliness and
social isolation
impact the body's
immune system

the health benefits
of **social
connectedness**

activities for
enhancing social
connectedness



At the end of this webinar,
you will have an increased
understanding of:

- Grief and the 5 stages of grief
- How grief can present in older adults
- How to work toward a new normal

SESSION 2

Learning Objectives

A wooden Adirondack chair sits on a wooden dock, facing a calm lake. In the background, there are green, forested mountains under a cloudy sky. The text 'INHALE' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters with a blue outline, and 'EXHALE' is overlaid below it in similar style but with a lighter blue outline. Both words are reflected in the water.

INHALE

EXHALE

GRIEF





Loss

Grief

- The actual emotion and reaction caused by loss
- Keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow, painful regret

Grieving is a highly individualized process with differences that need to be respected.

Definitions and Terms



BEREAVEMENT:

- condition of having been deprived of something or someone valued, especially through death

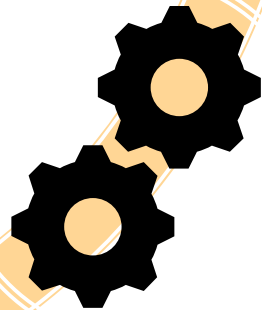
Objective state of loss



GRIEF:

- psychobiological reactions to loss

Subjective response to loss



MOURNING:

- psychological coping processes
May vary by culture, ethnicity, or religion

Stages of grief:



DENIAL:

doesn't believe
the loss



ANGER:

mad that it
happened



BARGAINING:

making deals
to try to
change the loss



DEPRESSION:

hopelessness
and despair

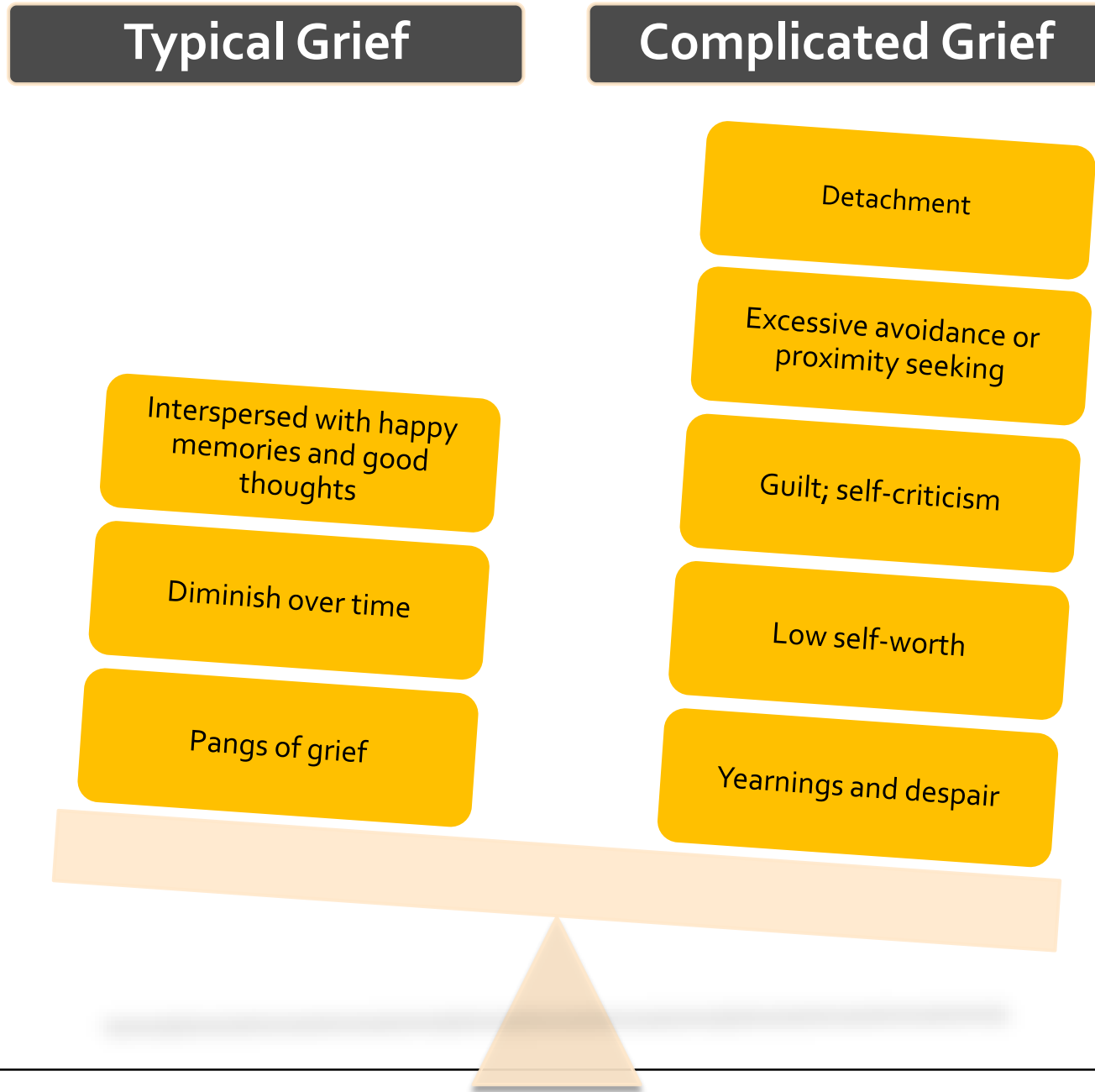


ACCEPTANCE:

moving beyond
the pain to
normal life



WHAT IS NORMAL?



Grief & Loss

There is no
“normal”
timetable for
grieving. Grieving
takes time.

Grieving is highly
individual.
Everyone grieves
differently.

Understand that
participants may
be grieving even if
they haven't lost a
loved one or the
loss is not recent.

Behaviors and
signs need to be
examined to
determine if they
are a function of
grief and loss.

HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK



HOW GRIEF
ACTUALLY
WORKS



- Shortness of breath
- Stomach aches
- Appetite changes
- Weaknesses
- Intestinal problems
- Sleep changes

- Fear
- Loneliness
- Helplessness

BIOLOGICAL

PSYCHOLOGICAL

A HOLISTIC LOOK AT GRIEF

SPIRITUAL

SOCIAL

- Struggle to find meaning

- Isolation
- Apathy

Integrate grief and loss into Plan of Care for participant

Include participants and family in care plan meeting

Recognize symptoms of grief and loss

Provide action plan

Assign /identify staff to carry out plan

Follow up

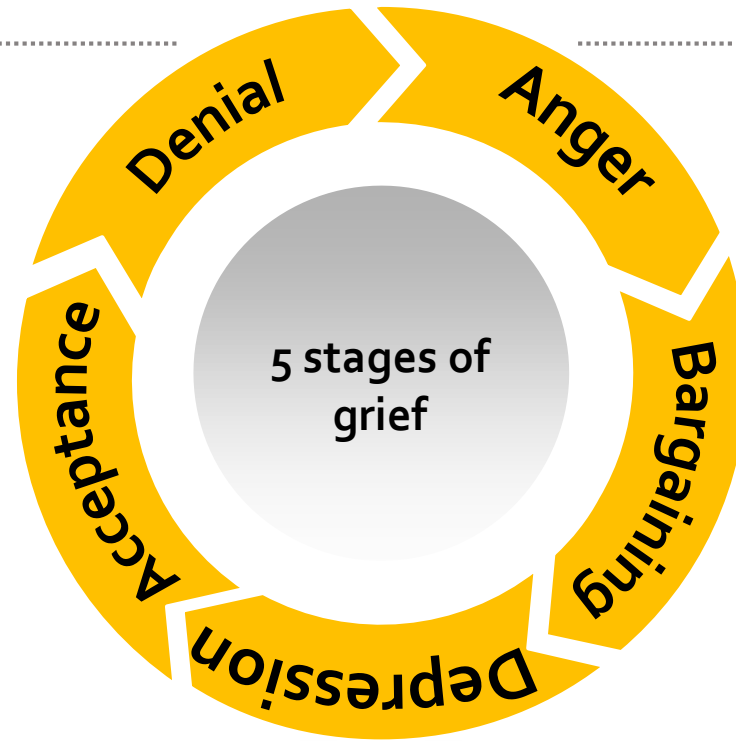


BEST PRACTICE:

Practical Application for Adult Day

Doesn't believe the loss

Mad that it happened



Moving beyond the pain to
normal life

Making deals to try to change
the loss

Hopelessness and despair

Five Stages of Grief

DENIAL

Conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, reality relating to the situation involved.

ANGER

Used as a coping mechanism to deal with the shock of the loss

BARGAINING

Some people stay in this state although most usually move through it.

DEPRESSION

In some studies, adult children caregivers were found to be more in denial than spousal caregivers.

ACCEPTANCE

(Review case study #2 presented again on next slide and discuss)

Scenario: Dave

Dave, an 85-year-old brilliant, retired physician has spent his career setting up clinics for indigent care and teaching medical students as well as having his own private practice. He now has a heart condition and appears very anxious at times.

He is also beginning to show some slight signs of confusion.

His wife of 60 years has recently died and since living alone he has been calling 911 several times per week at all hours of the day and night complaining of stomach pain.

So far, though, the hospital has not found any conclusive reason for the pain and has not admitted him. His daughter, Nan, the only family member living in the state, lives about 15 minutes away.

He calls Nan several times a day complaining of pain or asking how to operate things (such as the microwave) in his apartment. Each time, Nan answers the phone but becomes short with him, as she is juggling her full time job and 2 young children.

She has been meeting her Dad at the ER each time he calls 911 - any time of day or night. She was beginning to look into long-term care placement when she discovered adult day care.

Now, Dave attends 5 days per week from 7 am until 5:30 pm. When Nan arrives to pick up her Dad she is often very short with the staff and complains about being the only one in the family dealing with him.

She keeps talking about nursing home placement. When staff mentions Dave's confusion, she replies, "Oh, that's just normal aging— he's fine."

DENIAL

ANGER

BARGAINING

DEPRESSION

ACCEPTANCE

In this stage the person may become angry and hostile to those around them

This anger could be directed at God, themselves or others close to them.

Can be a very difficult time for those that care for the individual

Try not to take this anger personally.

DENIAL

ANGER

BARGAINING

DEPRESSION

ACCEPTANCE

The person may bargain silently with his/her God or higher power to try to regain control of the situation, often making promises.

“If you only will ____, I promise I will ____.”

Rarely provides a workable solution.

DENIAL

ANGER

BARGAINING

DEPRESSION

ACCEPTANCE

Natural state of sadness, regret, fear, etc.

Shows the individual has begun to accept reality

Can be misinterpreted as cognitive impairment/dementia in older adults.



GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

DENIAL

ANGER

BARGAINING

DEPRESSION

ACCEPTANCE

In this stage, the individual accepts the new circumstances that came from loss.

Indication that there is emotional detachment and objectivity.

A calm may come over the person as he or she lives out each day.

How to support someone who is grieving

LISTEN

Let them tell the story over and over. Repetition is part of the healing process.

CARE

Don't try to have the answers or the perfect thing to say. Tell them you can't imagine what they are experiencing but you care.

BE TOLERANT

Understand that the process may be slow and let them go at their own pace.

VALIDATE

Give them the freedom to be sad and grieve. Letting go is hard!

CELEBRATE

As you listen, show you value what they lost.

Support Groups
Offer

Offer topical
discussion groups

Other ideas?



BEST PRACTICE:

How to
Support Grief
and Loss in
Adult Day

SCENARIO: Eunice

Eunice is a 68 year old female who has been attending the Sunrise Adult Day Center for 10 years. She has a developmental disability and has required assistance her entire life.

She lives with her son, the primary caregiver. Eunice loves attending the center and each morning greets everyone as they arrive. She enjoys helping staff set up activities and is very social. She likes to get hugs from everyone and staff and participants enjoy her sweet disposition. In fact, it feels as though she is the “face” of the center.

One day, Eunice does not show up to the center and it is soon discovered she has died in a car accident. Her son, the driver, was injured but is expected to be okay. Everyone at the center is shocked.

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INHALE

EXHALE

Finding the **NEW*****NORMAL***

1. What Was Normal Prior To The Loss?

Relationships

Employment inside or outside of the home

Recreation

Spirituality

Support

Caregiving



1. What Was Normal Prior to The Loss?

Write about that in a journal or on a tablet.

What was normal before your loss is the baseline for your **NEW NORMAL**





Best Practice:
REMINISCE

Provide opportunity for
reminiscing

Both primary and secondary losses often cause a person to feel like they have lost their “normal life.”



The Loss
of “Normal
Life”

The grief process is actually normal and healthy and helps direct positive adjustments to create a “new normal.”



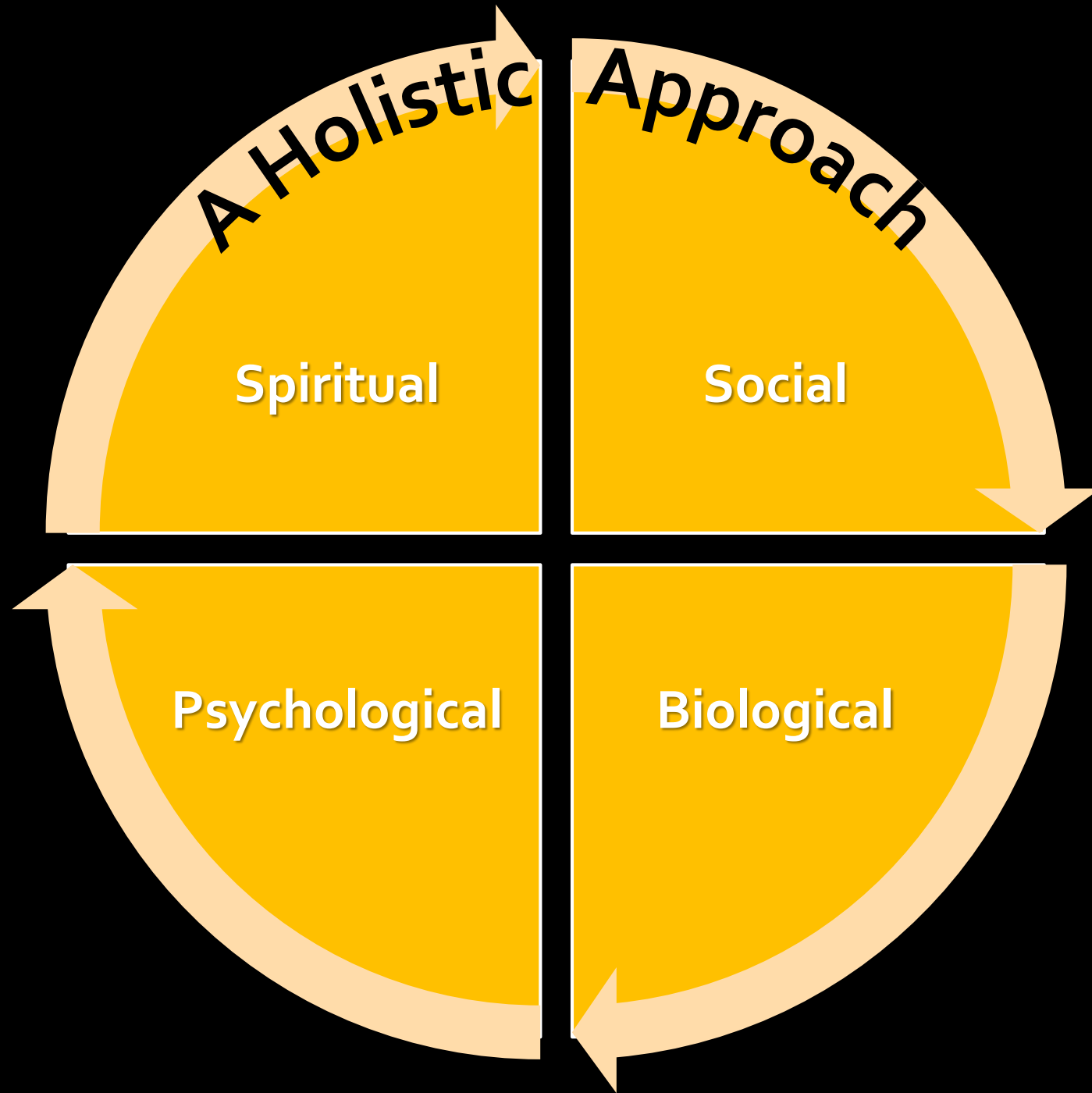
The chain reaction of losses can make an individual feel like they have lost “everything.”



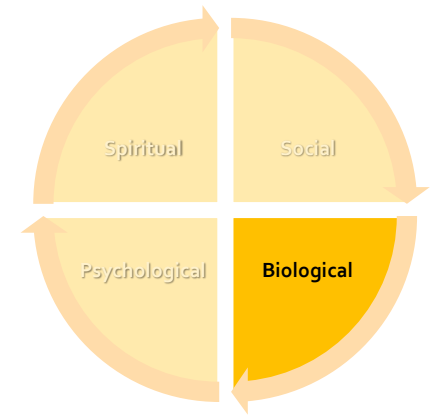
The
NEWNORMAL

The desired outcome of the grieving process is to find a way to move forward by:

- Integrating the loss into one's life
- Creating a new way of thinking and of living within the confines of the loss



Biological



Finding a new normal means addressing biological needs and taking good care of the basics.

Adequate
sleep

Hydration

Exercise

Nutrition

Exercise groups

Walks with small group

Balloon volleyball

Parachute

Dance

Opportunity to rest in separate room with recliners

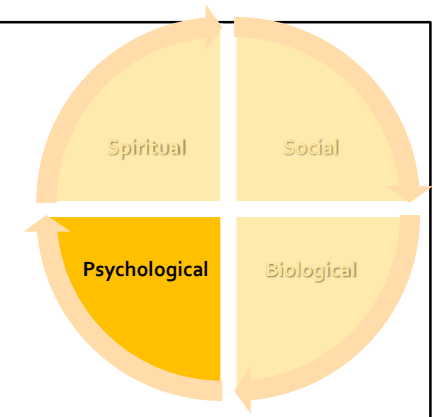
Other ideas?



Best Practice:

Practical Examples for Adult Day Care

Psychological



Finding a **NEW NORMAL** means addressing psychological needs.

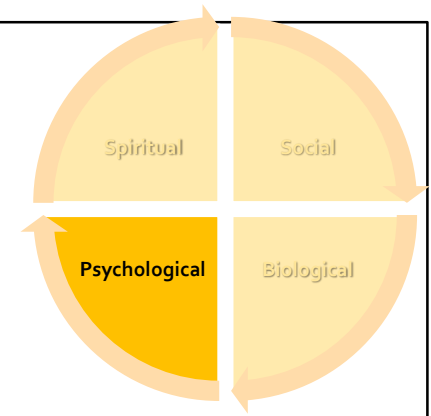
Ageism and age-related losses can devalue an older adult's perception of their worth.

Illness and frailty further impacts feelings a lack of value and self-worth.

Our participants desire to maintain personal dignity in the context of their lives not as a "disease process" or their limitations.

We need to focus on the quality of life, identify areas where we can validate their worth.

Psychological



It is important to older adults to have autonomy and to be involved in decision-making regarding their own lives.

This is particularly true in the face of losses that have required dependence on others.

Participation may be actual (such as participating in care plan) or "symbolic."

Facilitates positive coping and may offset feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.



Best Practice:

Practical Examples in Adult Day

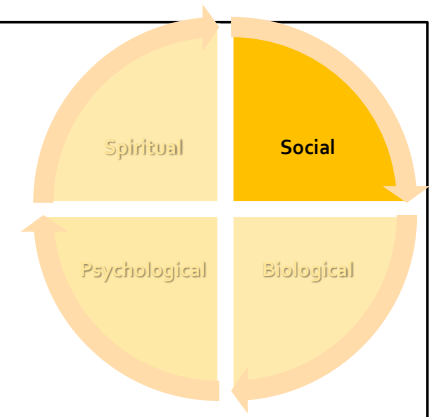
Decision making

- Planning activities together
- Concurrent programming
- Offer choices throughout the day

Empowerment

- Asking advice
- Other ideas?

Social



Finding a **NEW NORMAL** means addressing social needs.

Human beings are designed for meaningful relationship, which can be significantly altered through loss.

Abandonment is a fear of aging individuals.

Developing new social connections is important at whatever level is feasible.

Coffee klatch

Encourage participants to help with center chores

Encourage music and dance activities

Encourage small group activity

Small group tables for lunch

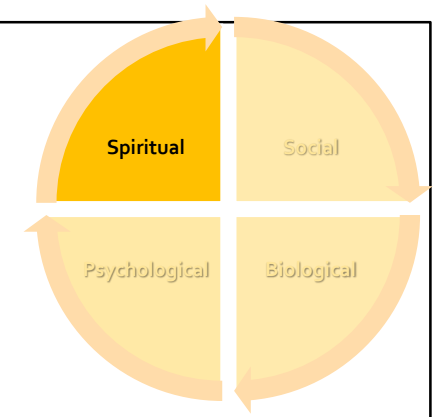
Other ideas?



Best Practice:

Practical Examples in Adult Day

Spirituality/Religion



Finding a new normal means
addressing spiritual needs.

It can be a significant
source of coping
and strength.

Source of
transforming
hopelessness
into hope and
meaning.

Individual's spiritual
struggle and
reexamination of
belief systems can
look
like unbelief.

Transcendence - the
boundaries of the
ordinary physical
human existence.
(*Trans – over; Scendere
– climb*)

Bible study groups

Meditation or yoga groups

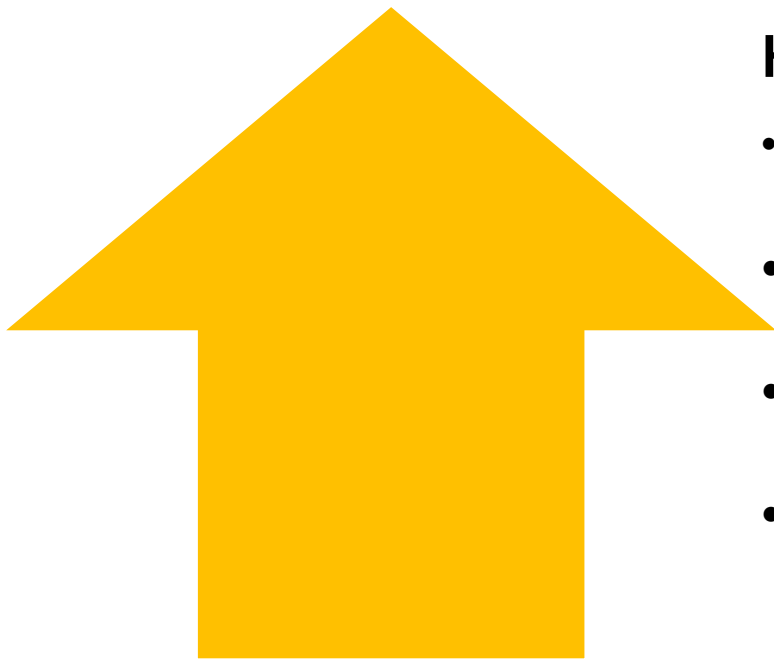
Nature groups

Discussion group topics



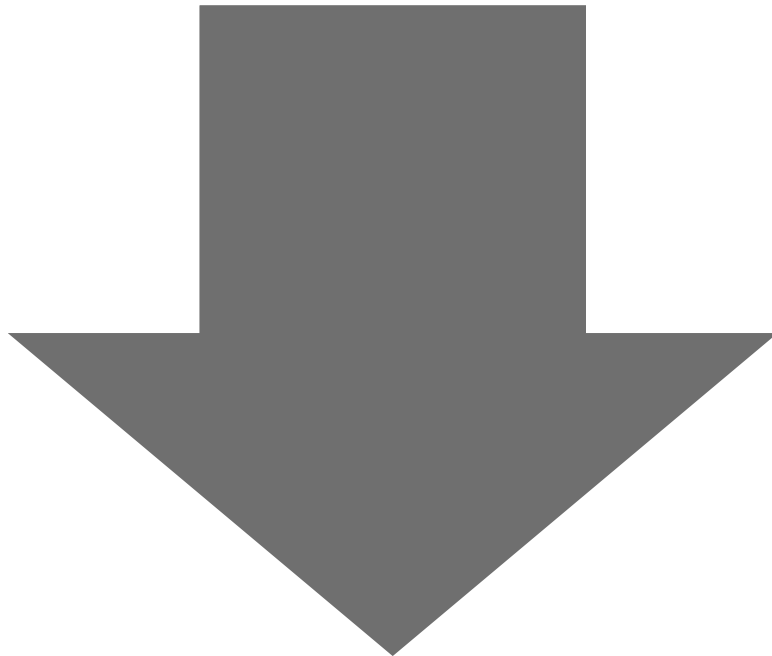
**Best
Practice:**

**Practical
Examples
in Adult
Day**



HELPFUL MESSAGES

- **Validate**
 - *"I know she meant so much to you"; I can see you are really upset*
- **Reminisce**
 - *"Tell me more about your Mom"; "Do you have any photos of her"?*
- **Reassure**
 - *There is no time-line for grieving, we all grieve at our own pace*
- **Show you care**
 - *She sounds like an amazing person*



UNHELPFUL MESSAGES

- **Minimizing the loss that has been experienced**
 - *"Oh, it's okay that you can't drive anymore. Someone will take you."*
 - *"Your husband is in a better place."*
- **Communicating that the grief response is too strong or not appropriate**
 - *"Please don't keep crying. It's upsetting the others."*
- **Suggestions that it's time to "move on"**
 - *"Your mother wouldn't want you to continue to be sad."*

**WHAT CAN *YOUR*
CENTER DO
TO PROMOTE**

**MENTAL
HEALTH?**

CASE STUDY

#2

*Dave and Nan
revisited:*

ACTION PLAN

Using the information about Dave and Nan and what you have learned this course, answer the questions on the handout to create an action plan for supporting Dave and Nan through loss, grief, and finding a new normal.

Family and Peer Community Support

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- Mental Health America
- Faith-based Groups
- Private Mental Health Practices
- Hospitals
- Community Mental Health Agencies
- Online communities/organizations



Educational Classes

Support Groups

Coping Skills

Links to Resources

Advocacy

5 Stages of grief: Review



DENIAL:

doesn't believe
the loss



ANGER:

mad that it
happened



BARGAINING:

making deals
to try to
change the loss



DEPRESSION:

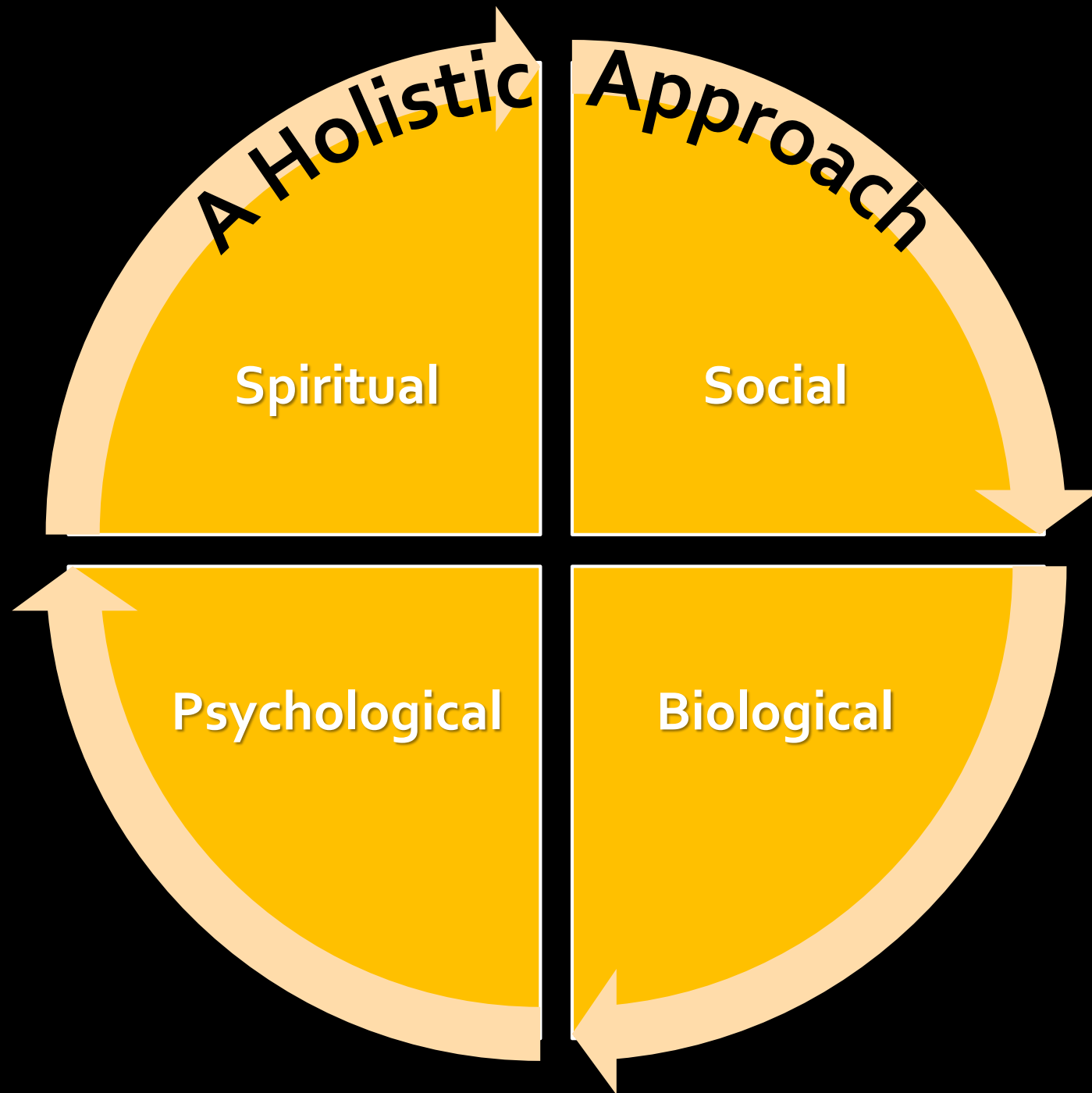
hopelessness
and despair

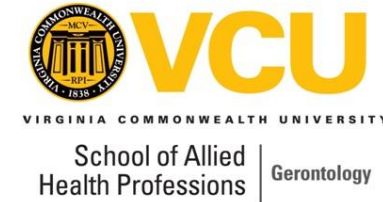


ACCEPTANCE:

moving beyond
the pain to
normal life







- Phone: (804) 828-1565
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- Email: agingstudies@vcu.edu
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Review parts 3 and 4

1

Part I: Loss

2

Part II: Grief and
the “New Normal”

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Part IV:
Social
Connectedness

THANK YOU