



BY Pallium Canada

Grief & Bereavement Literacy Series

Session 12: *“Bereavement in the Context of Homelessness”*

Presenters: **Joshua Black, PhD** and **Stephanie Laing**
 Project Interviewers: **Jody Monk, Bethany Presley, Sherry Landry**

July 10th, 2024: 12pm-1pm

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
Objectives, Overview and Session Materials	<p>Presenters: Joshua Black and Stephanie Laing</p> <p><u>Learning Objectives</u></p> <p>By the end of the session participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the bereavement experience in the context of homelessness • Identify where people who are experiencing homelessness find their bereaved support • Identify what can be done better to provide bereavement support moving forward.
Presentation Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May 2021, the BCCPC initiated a project with multiple research studies to understand the current state of bereavement in British Columbia. This research was used to guide a province-wide roundtable discussion that aimed to identify priority actions to address the needs of bereaved people and recommend strategies to improve bereavement support services. One of the action items that came from this action plan was to improve grief and bereavement support for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. • A brief overview on the research study: Bereavement experience in the context of homelessness. • Definition of homelessness: it may refer to individuals who are unsheltered (e.g., living in public spaces, on the streets), residing in emergency shelters, being provisionally accommodated (e.g., couches, cars), residing in substandard housing, and at risk of homelessness (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012) • It is common for the bereaved who are experiencing homelessness to be unrecognized grievers in their communities and to not be adequately supported in their bereavement • Rapid Review on the bereavement experience in the context of homelessness (Monk et al., 2023) - 4 themes that were generated were: Bereavement was a risk factor for homelessness, Anticipatory grief, Increased frequency of death, and Ways of processing grief. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The study highlights the importance of providing better bereavement support and suggests future research studies should explore how to best support bereaved individuals experiencing homelessness with their grief. • The next study explored the topic from the perspectives of frontline workers who provide health or social support for individuals experiencing homelessness in British Columbia. (https://www.bc-cpc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Frontline-Perspectives-Summary-Final.pdf) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Most participants agreed that grief has become normalized and expected within the landscape of the work they do with clients, they have experienced their own grief when a client has died, and almost all had a desire to increase their knowledge on grief and grief-informed approaches to care. ○ Themes generated for how we can increase grief support for people experiencing homelessness were the need for: Flexible service delivery, Increased grief and bereavement training for those who support clients, Increased interdisciplinary collaboration, Meet clients’ basic needs and establish safety. ○ Overall, this study paints a picture of broad unmet needs and low grief and bereavement literacies for both clients and staff.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This led to this study on Individuals with Lived/Living Experiences with the aim to better understand their grief experiences and thoughts on how to provide better bereavement support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many participants explicitly connecting their bereavement to the time they felt life “fell apart” (i.e., was the turning point for transitioning to homelessness). ○ Participants identified different challenges and barriers to support: Limited knowledge on what support is available, Limited services/resources available to provide support, The (in)accessibility of services, Stigma and mistrust of available support ○ Some future grief support suggestions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More 1 on 1 and group supports with people they trust and in a safe space and place. ○ More outreach workers providing grief support and more people who come to you and places where you can go ○ Animal therapy ○ Peer support (lived experience and from same cultural background) ○ Increased staff/volunteer grief and bereavement training ○ Creativity outlets for grief such as Art-based support, dance, etc. ○ Culturally specific supports ○ Meet their basic needs (food and housing)
<p>LIVED EXPERIENCE Discussion</p>	<p>Reflections from the closing event in Kelowna</p> <p>Sherry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a frontline human service worker who attended to over 100 ODs, Sherry put a lot into the project based on her own personal experience and knowledge of what these people wanted, helping to build trust and be a safe space for them to open up freely. • During the ceremony, we completed the event with a memorial art piece together: a white shopping cart adorned with the names of those we have lost, now respectfully located at Outdoor sheltering site 4 in Kelowna. The painted cart had NFA initials meaning ‘No Fixed Address’ on it. The white cart symbolizes “bringing life back to those that are grieving”. This is symbolic in the Indigenous culture as it indicates showing respect to those who have passed. • It was life changing for both Sherry and the participants. <p>Jess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closing event had a positive change on Jess as this has led to her volunteering with folks who have experienced homelessness. <p>Jody</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It felt symbolic and haunting for Jody. A big learning take-away with her experience as a frontline staff was having to confront her ego and validating her own grief. <p>Reflections from the closing event in the DTES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff playing a role in nurturing and creating an environment that is in tune with the needs of the people. • People shared how important the event was to them and mentioned having such event more often due to the trust that was built and safe space provided. <p>Reflection on the Interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touched on individuals responding to being asked how they were responding to their grief and also recognizing the streets culture – openness, trust and safety. • The basic needs of the people should be met so as to feel a long-term sense of safety to grieve fully. • In all, when a safe space is provided and one is willing to listen, it is amazing what people are willing to share when they have that safe space. <p>Q: Is there access to grief training for people facing homelessness in addictions?</p> <p>A: A free educational module is in works that will serve as a guide to provide a safe space, confidence and a better understanding of grief and bereavement.</p>

	<p>Upcoming Session:</p> <p><i>Disenfranchised Loss: Addressing the Needs of Pet Loss Grief Support</i> - Wednesday, Sept 25th 12pm-1pm PDT. Presenter: Pam Bilusack. More information and to REGISTER.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	<p>Recording Link</p> <p><i>Research studies</i></p> <p>Rapid Review Research Summary</p> <p>Frontline Perspectives Research Summary: https://www.bc-cpc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Frontline-Perspectives-Summary-Final.pdf</p> <p>The action plan report link: https://www.bc-cpc.ca/about-us/activities/new-projects/bereavement-study/grief-and-bereavement-support-in-bc-a-collaborative-improvement-action-plan/</p> <p>The Kelowna Homelessness Research Centre: https://khrc.ok.ubc.ca/</p> <p><i>Other Links:</i></p> <p>Joshua's podcast link: https://www.griefdreams.ca/</p> <p>Our ECHO program webpage lists all current sessions open for registration</p>