

Grief & Bereavement Literacy Series

Challenges and resilience in the 2SLGBTQ+ Community – exploring grief and bereavement through a holistic lens

Presenters: Geoff Straw, Mike Biggin

Date: April 23, 2025



BY
Pallium Canada



*The BC Centre for Palliative Care
is the provincial hub partner of the
Palliative Care ECHO Project in British
Columbia*

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The Palliative Care ECHO Project

The Palliative Care ECHO Project is a 5-year national initiative to cultivate communities of practice and establish continuous professional development among health care providers across Canada who care for patients with life-limiting illness.

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The Palliative Care ECHO Project is supported by a financial contribution from Health Canada.

Production of this presentation has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.



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Introductions

Presenters

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Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

*Increase awareness of
grief and loss in the
2SLGBTQ+ community*

*Understand potential
barriers to support
services*

*Identify client centered
approaches in providing
support*

What do all the letters and symbols mean?

- 2S

- LGBT

- Q +

Loss is

- Death is not the greatest loss in life; the greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live

- Norman Cousins

Trauma

- Bereavement support and trauma informed care
- Losses experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ individuals throughout the life span
- Awareness of the challenges and differences of each generation in the quest for wholeness
- Canada protects the rights of transgendered people through the Canadian human rights act
- Policy changes may threaten those rights



- **“All of us are put into boxes by our family, by our religion, by our society, our moment in history, even our own bodies. Some people have the courage to break free.”**
- _ Geena Rocero, advocate

It's OK that you're not OK...

- Grief is the response to love and loss
- Our culture tends to treat grief like an illness to be cured
- Well meaning advice may make it more difficult for grievers
- -Megan Devine

Grief is.....

- As unique as your thumbprint
- Not a problem to be solved, but an experience to be lived
- Not a linear process
- Impacts us on all levels of our being our unique response to grief
- (passive, choiceless)
- 2SLGBTQ+ disenfranchised and marginalized

Grief is...

- I had my own notion of grief. I thought it was a sad time, that followed the death of someone you love. And you had to push through it to get to the other side. But I'm learning, there is no other side.....
- There is no pushing through, but rather, there is absorption.
- Adjustment
- Acceptance
- And grief is not something you complete, but rather you endure. Grief is not a task to finish, and move on, but an element of yourself – an alteration of your being
- “Grief” by Gwen Flowers

Rumi

“Once you accept the troubles you’ve been given,
the door opens”



Grief response

- A process of relearning the world as we adapt and come to terms with the loss
- Involves action and engagement with our reactions and the world around us
- The search for meaning and renewed purpose
- Who am I becoming?

Resilient Grieving (L. Hone)

- Understand that suffering and loss are a part of life
 - Choosing where to place your focus
 - Is this helping or harming me?
 - Social support

Queer resilience

- Skills and abilities learned and developed because of adversarial experiences of prejudice and discrimination
- Supportive relationships (chosen family)
- Community connectedness
- Self acceptance



Barriers to support

- Isolation is significantly greater in 2SLGBTQ+ seniors than in the non-queer/trans seniors community
- 2020 survey indicated that 48% of queer and trans seniors had not told their primary care provider about their sexual/gender identity
- Lack of community bereavement supports for queer individuals
- Groups may not be welcoming
- A sense of abandonment may be re experienced in seeking grief support
- Fear of judgement from others

Fostering acceptance, comfort and belonging

- Honour preferred pronouns; use language that promotes equity, safety and belonging
- Don't assume heterosexuality or gender
- Re visit intake forms and assessment process
- Include 2SLGBTQ+ symbols on website and in other spaces
- Consider training in providing support and seek to understand 2SLGBTQ+ history
- Establish in house supports including one-on-one and groups





Imagine...

- **Imagine creating an organization where people feel psychologically safe, where residents , staff and volunteers don't have to leave their real selves at home. Moral stress is reduced, authenticity is encouraged which in turn increases health outcomes and retention of staff and clients**



Support might be...

- Health Initiative for Men (HIM): health based programs and services to strengthen the well-being of GBQ men and gender diverse people
- Qmunity: queer, trans and two spirit folks looking for a sense of community; offering youth, seniors and counselling and education programs
- Dignity Seniors Society: supporting 2SLGBTQ+ seniors and those who work with them; advocate, educate and collaborate
- Spiritual communities: Queer Dharma, United and Anglican church groups