



BY Pallium Canada

Grief & Bereavement Literacy Series

Session 18: *“Challenges and resilience in the 2SLGBTQ+ community: Exploring grief and bereavement through a holistic framework”*

Presenter: **Geoff Straw**, M.A., Registered Clinical Counsellor

Mike Biggin (lived experience)

Apr 23, 2025: 12pm-1pm PST

Agenda Item	Discussion
Introduction & Objectives	<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of grief and loss in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. • Understand potential barriers to support services. • Identify client centered approaches in providing support.
Presentation Key points	<p><u>Understanding 2SLGBTQ+ Context</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2S: Two-Spirit • LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and others • The "+" reflects inclusion of all non-cis/heterosexual identities. <p><u>Understanding Loss and Grief</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presenter discussed the trauma and loss experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals, including historical discrimination and recent rejection of gender fluid identity, further highlighting the importance of considering this background information when working with grieving individuals. • Grief impacts individuals on multiple levels including physically and cognitively. • Loss includes many non-death-related experiences: rejection, invisibility, exclusion, erasure, and trauma. • Grief is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not an illness to be cured. ○ Unique like a thumbprint. ○ Non-linear and multifaceted (emotional, physical, spiritual). ○ A part of identity, not something to “move through” and “complete.” <p><u>Trauma-Informed Bereavement Care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the lifelong marginalization and trauma faced by 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. • Experiences of loss occur throughout the lifespan (e.g., rejection from family, systemic discrimination). • Importance of generational context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different generations face distinct risks and cultural challenges. • Rights (e.g., gender identity protections) are protected but also politically vulnerable. <p><u>Grief Philosophies and Reflections</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grief is often misunderstood and treated as a problem to fix, rather than a human experience to honour. Megan Devine’s book “It’s okay that you’re not okay” explores the journey towards self-acceptance for those who are queer and experiencing grief. • Grief isn’t something to get over, but something to integrate and live with. • Rumi: Acceptance opens the door to transformation. • Grief involves:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relearning the world. ○ Seeking new meaning and purpose. ○ Asking, “Who am I becoming now?” <p><u>Queer Resilience & Strength</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queer communities have developed resilience through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adversity and discrimination. ○ Building “chosen families” and supportive peer networks. ○ Cultivating self-acceptance and community connection. • Resilient grieving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge that loss is part of life. ○ Choose focus: “Is this helping or harming me?” ○ Emphasize social support. <p><u>Barriers to Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many grief support spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May feel unwelcoming or unsafe. ○ Can trigger re-experienced abandonment. ○ Present risks of judgment or misunderstanding. <p><u>Fostering Belonging & Psychological Safety</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key practices for service providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use inclusive language (e.g., preferred pronouns). ○ Avoid assumptions of heterosexuality/gender. ○ Update intake/assessment forms to reflect identity options. ○ Display 2SLGBTQ+ symbols visibly (e.g., websites, posters). ○ Invest in staff training on 2SLGBTQ+ history and support needs. ○ Provide in-house support groups and one-on-one services. • Vision: A workplace or service setting where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People bring their full selves. ○ Moral distress is reduced. ○ Authenticity is encouraged. ○ Staff and client well-being and retention improve. <p><u>Support Resources & Community Organizations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Initiative for Men (HIM): Health-based services for GBQ men and gender-diverse people. • Qmunity: Provides community, counselling, and education for queer, trans, and Two-Spirit people of all ages. • Dignity Seniors Society: Advocacy and education for 2SLGBTQ+ seniors and those supporting them. • Spiritual Communities: Queer-inclusive faith spaces like Queer Dharma, United Church, Anglican groups.
<p>Lived Experience, Q&A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared their experience of losing their mother six months ago, emphasizing the unique challenges faces by queer individuals in grief. • Discussed the challenges of balancing family dynamics, advocating for their family’s acceptance, and the importance of creating new support systems while grieving. • Shared various coping mechanisms used in dealing with their grief.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They highlighted the importance of finding a supportive therapist, especially one who understands LGBTQ+ experiences and the need for explicit assurances of inclusion in funeral settings.
<p>Closing, Future Sessions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Video recording ❖ Upcoming Session: May 28th session: <i>Grief and Loss Along the Dementia Journey</i> Register ❖ Past sessions: https://www.bc-cpc.ca/echo-project-new-home/echo-project-past-series-and-resources/#1694021429157-e9440b18-3da4 ❖ Other Links: Joshua's podcast link: https://www.griefdreams.ca/