



PERINATAL LOSS

When Hope Unborn Dies

Pastoral Care Department

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Goals

- Better understand the role of Spiritual Care and the Uniqueness of this Grief
- Disarm the anxiety around issues of perinatal loss
- Be able to offer appropriate interventions

Agenda

- Getting in Touch with Our Understanding
- Unique issues of Grief
- Complicated Journey
- Interventions
 - Do's and Don'ts

Pregnancy and Perinatal Loss

- Definitions and Statistics
- What to expect
 - physically
 - mentally
 - emotionally
 - spiritually
- Personal Inventory

Perinatal Loss

Definition: any loss of an infant during pregnancy or the first 28 days of life

- Miscarriage- less than 20 weeks (PA = 16 weeks – no birth or death certificates)
 - 1 in 5
- Stillbirth - after 20 weeks of gestation
 - 1 in 100
- Neonatal Death - death of an infant within the first 28 days
 - 1 in 110
- Medical Interruption - ectopic, selective fetal reduction, elective termination (some for medical reasons-125-130/year)

How do you?

How do you love a person
who never got to be,
or try to envision a face
you never got to see?

How do you mourn the death of one
who never got to live.

When there's nothing to feel good about
and nothing to forgive?

I love you, my little baby,
my companion of the night.

Wandering through my lonely hours,
beautiful and bright.

What does it mean to die before
you ever were born,
to live the lovely night of life
and never see the dawn?

Ah! My little baby,
you lived like anyone!

Life's a burst of joy and pain.
And then like yours, it's done.

I love you, my little baby,
just as if you'd lived for years.

No more, no less, I think of you,
the Angel of my tears.

- *Author Unknown*

Preparing for the Unknown

- Physically
- Emotionally
- Mentally
- Spiritually



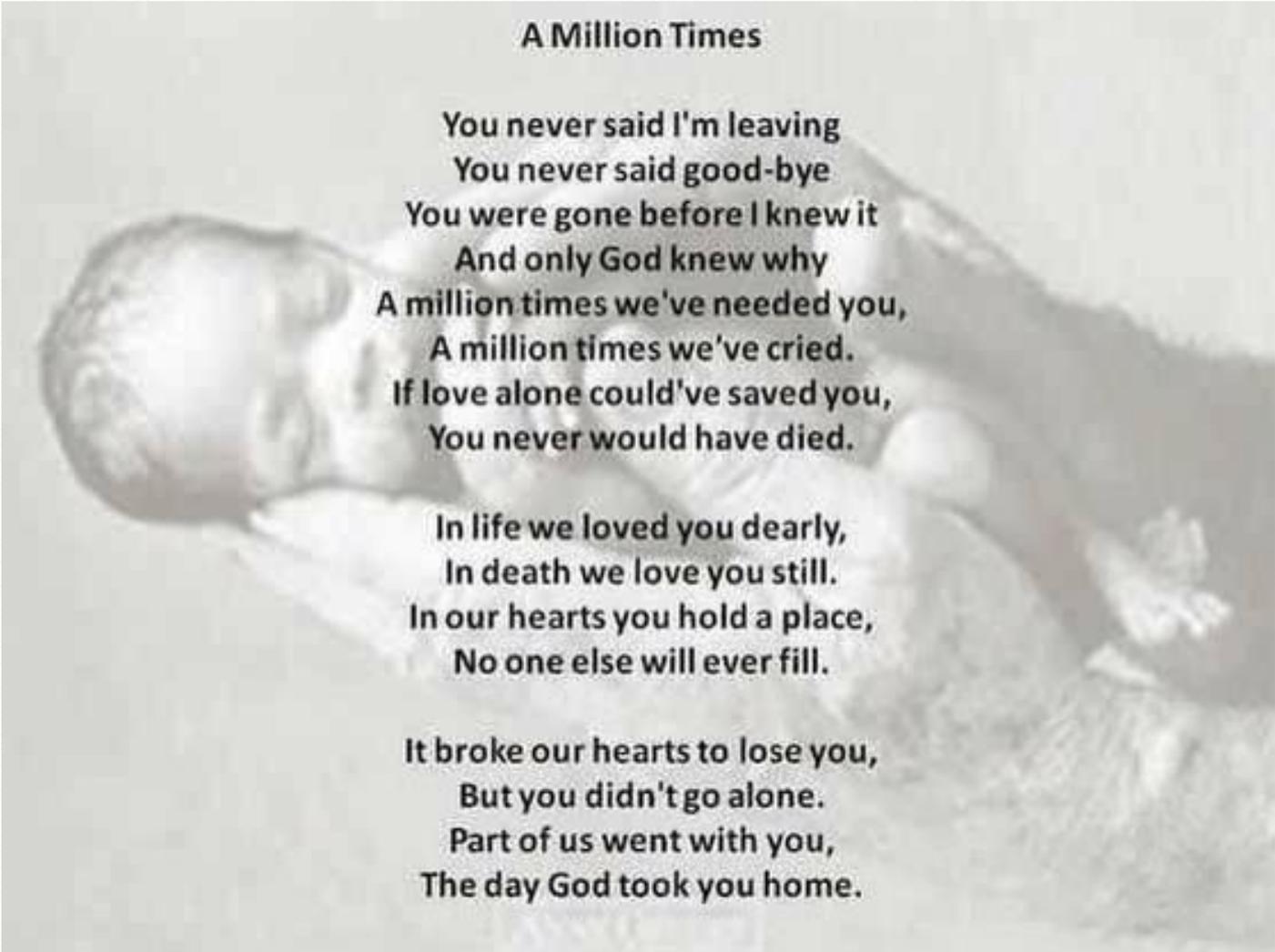


26 weeks
gestation

A Core Strategy for Taking Inventory

PRAM

- PAUSE
 - REFLECT
 - ACKNOWLEDGE
 - be MINDFUL



A Million Times

You never said I'm leaving
You never said good-bye
You were gone before I knew it
And only God knew why
A million times we've needed you,
A million times we've cried.
If love alone could've saved you,
You never would have died.

In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still.
In our hearts you hold a place,
No one else will ever fill.

It broke our hearts to lose you,
But you didn't go alone.
Part of us went with you,
The day God took you home.

It's Not About You

Empathy - ability to put oneself in another person's "place"

- Needs of Parent (s)
- Cultural Preferences
- Religious Ceremonies

Through our own lenses



Examining Your Lens

- Thoughts on death
- Feelings about the assignment
- Emotions about the situation
- What clouds your lens
- Family Systems



How Much Did You Bring ?



Thinking Outside of the Box



Why? Why? Why?

- Spiritual Distress
- Meaning and Value
- Comfort
- Validation



Cultural Considerations



Time
Space
Communication
Food Customs
Health Practices
Sacred Beliefs
Religious Customs

What's Culture Got to Do with It?

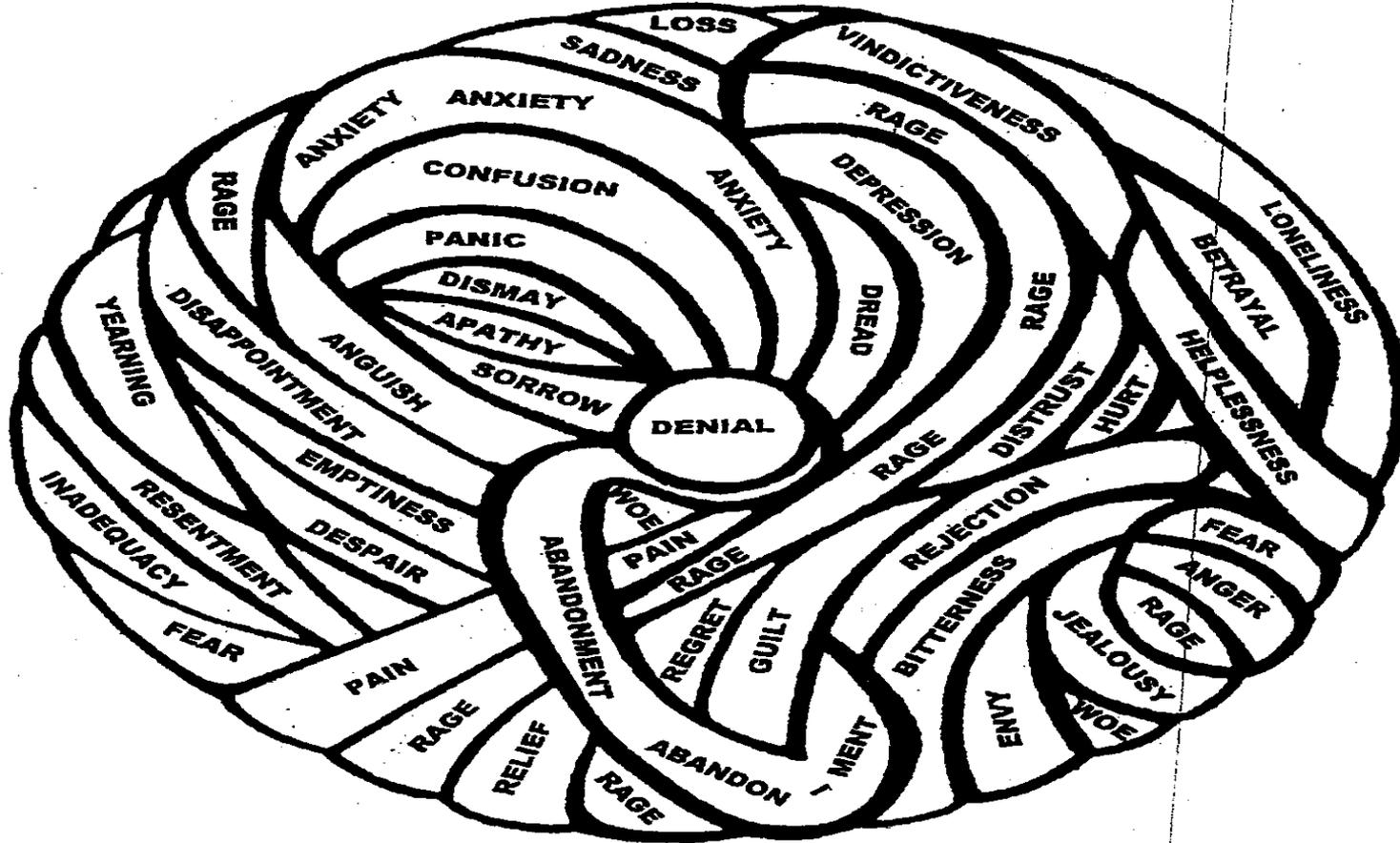
- Definition
- A shared set of belief systems, values, practices and assumptions which determine how we interact with and interpret the world

Dimensions

- Your Culture
- Other Person's Culture
- Culture of the Setting

GRIEF . . .

A TANGLED 'BALL' OF EMOTIONS



Uniqueness of Grief

past , present and future

- Past
- Rituals
- Name
- Memories
- Social Expectations
- Mourning
- Empty arms, broken dreams, plans
- Why?
- Empty arms
- Broken Dreams
- Plans
- Why?

Loss

- Losses are often expressed indirectly by highly charged emotions of anger sadness and anxiety. We tend to withdraw from those emotions but people need us to move toward them. We can only do that when we have dealt with our own emotions
- It isn't loss that destroys us it is loss plus isolation.

What they need from you

- Therapeutic listener- non-judgmental presence
- Help the family define faith
- Being present with expression of negative feelings, especially anger
- Acknowledge hopes, dreams, regrets
- Help with practical realities of closure

A Bridge of Hope



- Strong enough to hold the weight of heavy hearts
- Sound enough to weigh the winds of anger,
- Absorbent enough to take in all the tears.
- You are the bridge

Crying 101 :

-Don't be afraid of tears-yours or theirs.

If while trying to comfort someone they start to cry, it is not that you have caused them pain but rather that you have given them the gift of an outlet for their grief. Count it as a privilege to be a part of the healing. Count it a joy to be fully human.

Spiritual Injuries

- Separation of a person from what is “ most essential” to their sense of self
 - God, Allah, G-d, Yahweh, Jehovah, Jesus, Spirit of Life, Creator, Buddha... or a less defined sense of their own goodness
- Some religions have “clear rules”
 - rituals – prohibited
- Some people have “clear delusions”
 - magical thinking, believing in the power of their own thoughts (woulda, shoulda, coulda)
- Refusal to be forgiven- consequences
- Call to care for the soul

“Guiding Principals”

- Beneficence – First do no harm
- Autonomy of the patients – their care is not about your values
- Professional duty and integrity - standards
- Respect for human dignity

Do's and Don'ts

- Platitudes
- Political, criminal or religious viewpoints
- Fears
- Questions
- Assumptions
- Answers

Entering the Lonely “ PLACE”

- **P**atience - Whatever concerns you is worth my time
- **L**isten actively and attentively - being fully present
- **A**cceptance of the present reality of circumstances
- **C**ry ,tears need an outlet
- **E**ncourage feeling the feelings

Kahlil Gibran on “Listening”

My soul preached to me and taught me to listen to the voices which the tongue and the larynx and the lips do not utter.

Ere my soul preached to me I heard naught but clamor and wailing. But now I eagerly attend silence and hear its choirs singing the hymns of the ages and the songs of the firmament announcing the secrets of the unseen.

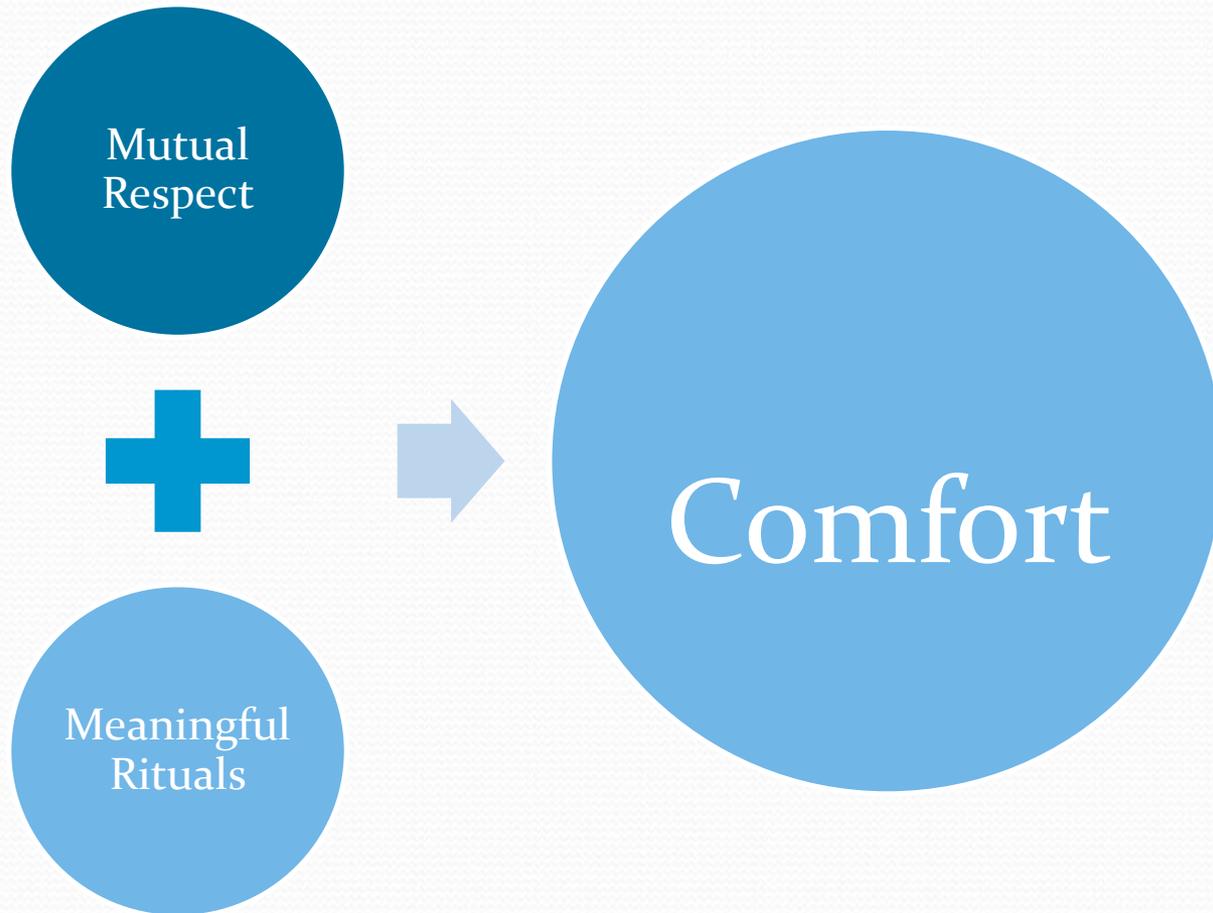
Ceremonies and Services

- Baptism or commendation
 - need for reassurance/ safety
 - emotional release

Memorials and Funerals

- social and spiritual release
- Burial
 - physical release

Religious Beliefs



Teamwork

- Nurses/Doctors
- Social Workers
- Initiative
- Debriefing
- Bereavement Committee
- Community Memorial options

A PRAYER FOR A GRIEF COUNSELOR

Lord, guide me along another person's path of grief and sorrow

Allow me to walk humbly by their side.

Teach me to listen not only with my ears, but also with my heart.

Teach me to speak not only with words, but also in silence.

Guide my actions and words that no further pain be inflicted.

At the end of my visit, give me the strength to cross into my life's path until we journey again.

And finally, help me to accept each person as they are without judging them.

Irene Wolf

All I really needed to know
I learned from a silent bouquet

