



What program do you recommend to get certified in grief counseling?

A: I am certified in Thanatology, which is the study of death, dying, and bereavement. I received my certification from the Association for Death Education and Counseling. Here is their link: <https://www.adec.org/>. Another program you may want to consider is the American Academy for Grief Counseling. See link: <http://aihcp.net/american-academy-of-grief-counseling/>. There are colleges that offer programs in Thanatology. You might want to consider those, if you are interested in getting a degree in that specific discipline.

Have you found that having a grieving support system outside of grief counseling helps the individual cope over time or does it vary by the person?

A: A grieving support system outside of grief counseling will certainly help an individual cope over time. Yet, it varies by persons. There is no “one” way to help individuals grieve. Yet, having an effective [and appropriate] support system is important.

How do you work with clients who go through the process of “Why didn't I see this coming?” “I wish they would have reached out to me.”

A: I have had clients say those words to me. It is usually the guilt that is driving those questions, especially when individuals have died as a result of suicide. I usually allow them to express and share their guilt. Guilt and regret are very intense emotions. It is important to support and encourage clients to address those issues. If they are not addressed, they can potentially interfere with the healing process.

Are there interventions or treatment for people experiencing complicated grief?

A: The Center for Complicated Grief is a great place to start: Here is their link: <https://complicatedgrief.columbia.edu/professionals/complicated-grief-professionals/overview/>. They offer trainings as well. See link: <https://complicatedgrief.columbia.edu/professionals/training/>. They also have a handout that you can download on complicated grief and treatment. See link: http://complicatedgrief.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CG-and-Its-Treatment_short.pdf

Disenfranchised grief is experienced in my high school setting. Any techniques particularly useful with youth?

A: Disenfranchised grief is very complex in a high school setting. Sometimes, adults may be “closed” about grieving themselves or showing grief that our children do not always know how to grieve. Grief can be stigmatized because our culture does not *always* support grief, especially for men who have been conditioned to not cry. If they cry or share emotions, they may be ridiculed and told they are “weak.” We are emotional beings, and it is important to give students a safe space to grieve and share their emotions. I usually allow students or teens to do expressive therapies, such as drawing, dramatizations, writing rap songs about grief, journaling, and playing games. Also, I would consider “Healing Circles” for teens. It gives them a “safe” space without judgement and persons being critical. Check out this link:

<https://www.expressiveartworkshops.com/how-to-start-your-own-art-program/spontaneous-art-therapy-activities-for-teens/>

You can also use this workbook to do activities with teens. See link:

<http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/sites/default/files/ebp/Dealing-with-Trauma-A-TF-CBT-Workbook-for-Teens.pdf>

Three other great resources are:

The Dougy Center. See link: <https://www.dougy.org/>

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children. See link: <https://www.starr.org/training/tlc/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. See link: <https://www.nctsn.org/>

K4Health. See link: <https://www.k4health.org/sites/default/files/HelpingTeensWorkThroughGrief.pdf>

Since everyone grieves differently, and there is no time limit on the grieving process, how can you accurately identify the warning signs?

A: You can accurately identify the warning signs of grief by assessing things that interfere with an individual's normal functioning. An example: If you know someone who is normally actively, vibrant, outgoing, and then they become withdrawn, nervous, and anxious after experiencing a loss, then they may be experiencing grief. Grief can change the very being of a person. Just like an individual knows his/her body and recognizes changes—then they may identify and know that something is wrong with them. It is the same with grief. If you are the observer, and you know it not like your family member or friend to not socialize, or go to work late, or be withdrawn, then you can probably guess that the individual is demonstrating some of those signs that are attributable to grief.

Does the processing of grief depend upon their cultural or religious belief?

A: Yes, the process of grief depends upon the individual's cultural and religious beliefs. Some cultures support grieving, while other cultures may feel like it is a waste of time. Some religious beliefs or faiths may say, "we will pray that God gives you peace". Grieving is a unique process for each individual. Honoring that is so very important to the healing process. For example: I had a client, who was from a country in Africa. Her father died, and she was to wear black for a year as a sign of mourning. I did not say she should take off the black attire or that it was wrong. I encouraged/allowed her to be where she was and to go through her "own" healing journey.

Here is an article: <https://www.upaya.org/uploads/pdfs/GriefasBurdenGriefasGift1.10.11.pdf>. This article may also help you: http://adventist.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/39321/Cultural-differences-in-dealing-with-loss.pdf. Another one: https://www.nhpc.org/sites/default/files/public/education/Cultural_Comptency_Grief-Loss_Sept_09_NL.pdf. One more: <https://www.griefhealingblog.com/2015/03/religion-and-spirituality-in-grief.html>

Here are some resources. See below:

Center for Loss and Life Transition. See link: <https://www.centerforloss.com/>

New York Life Foundation. See link: <https://www.newyorklife.com/foundation/bereavement>

National Alliance for Grieving Children. See link: <https://childrengrieve.org/>

National Association of School Psychologists. See link: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/addressing-grief>

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement. See link:

<https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/projects/coalition-to-support-grieving-students/>

Death Café. See link: <http://deathcafe.com/>

International End of Life Doula Association. See link: <http://inelda.org/>

Grief.com. See link: <https://grief.com/resources/>

Centering Corporation and Grief Digest Magazine. See link: <https://centering.org/>

Sesame Street & Grief. See link: <http://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/topic/grief/?ytid=a2VpflpbOmk>

If you have questions, please contact me at reachinc1@gmail.com

I wish you well as you pursue this path of helping others with grief and loss!

Thank you,

Lisa Connors

