


**Grief in the NICU**

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**Taryn Schuelke, BS, CT, CCLS**  
Certified in Thanatology:  
Death, Dying and Bereavement

**Grief and Bereavement Specialist**  
Palliative Care Service  
Texas Children's Hospital



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No Disclosures

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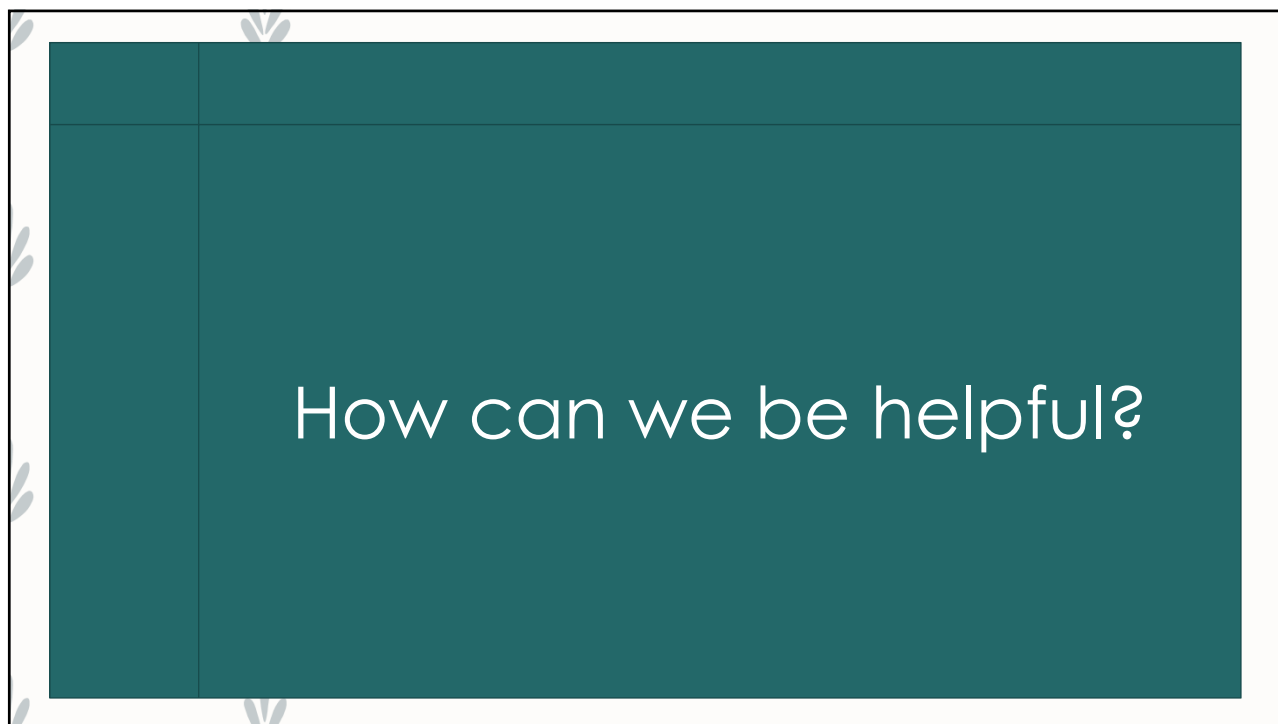
## Learning Objectives

- Describe at least two types of grief, or loss, that families experience when their infant is admitted to the NICU
- List one communication technique that is helpful for talking with grieving families
- Identify one or more opportunities to improve the support you or your NICU provides to families grieving a neonatal death

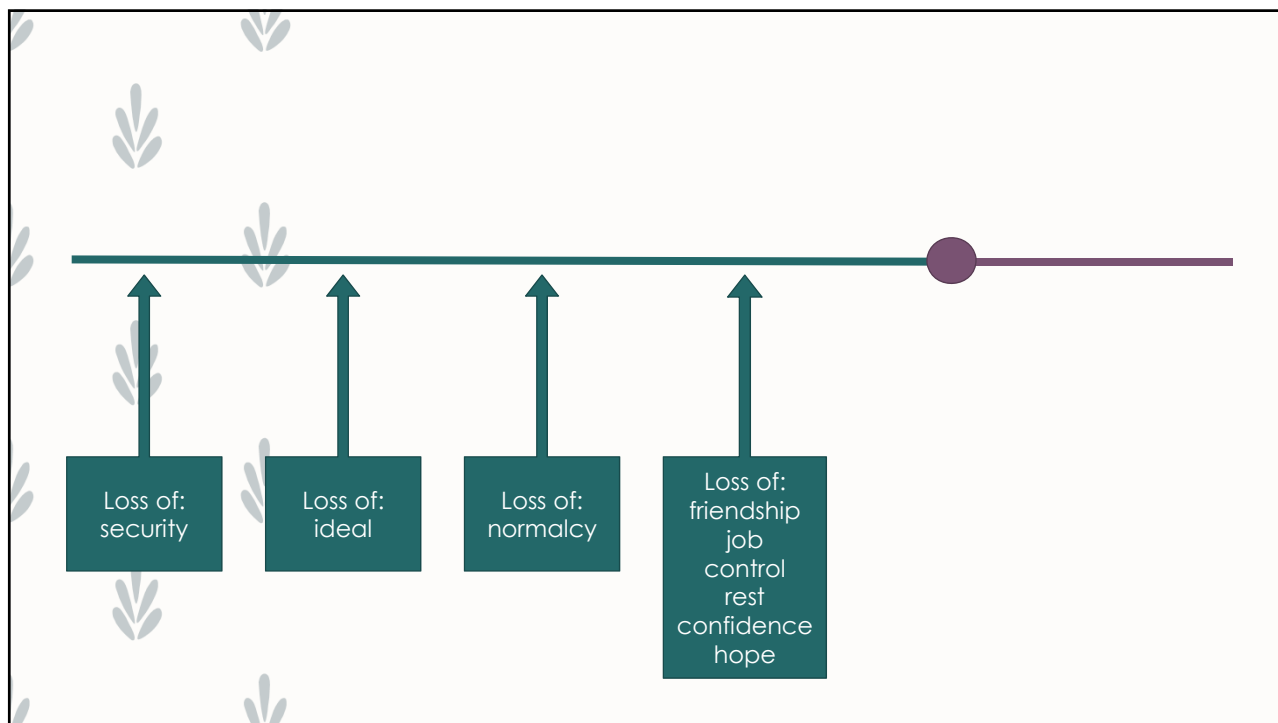
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## Types of Losses and Grief

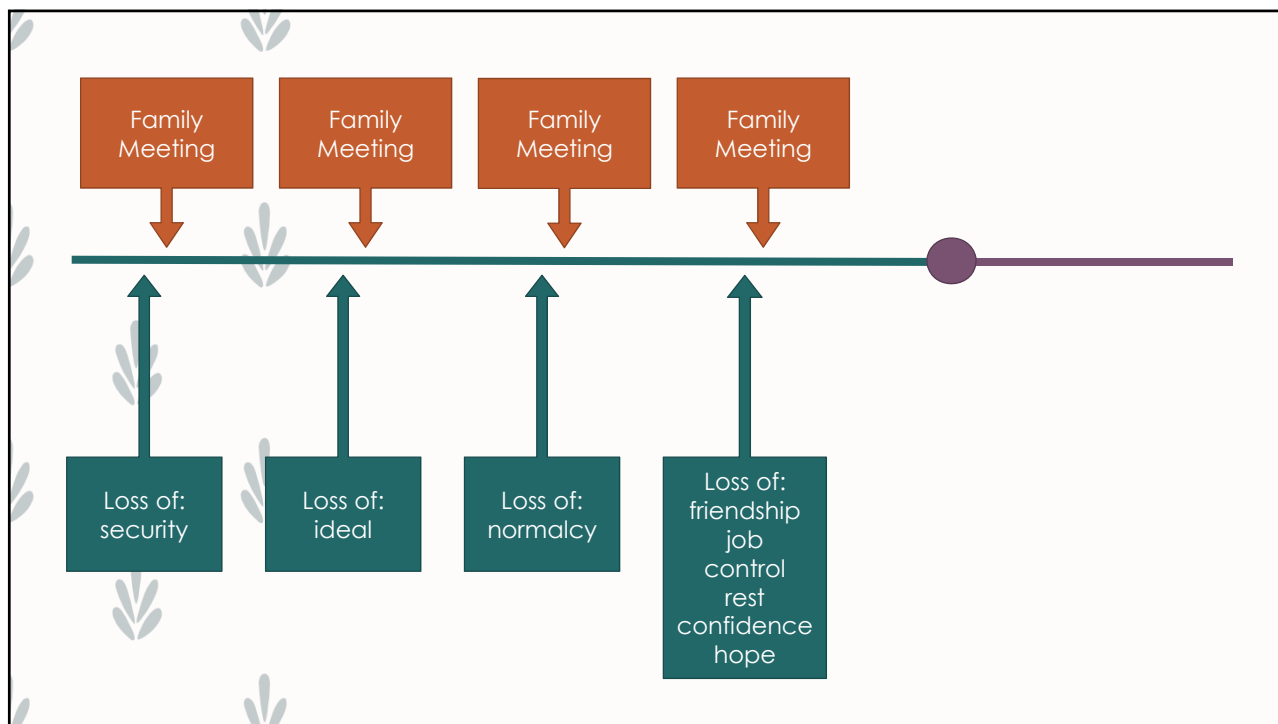
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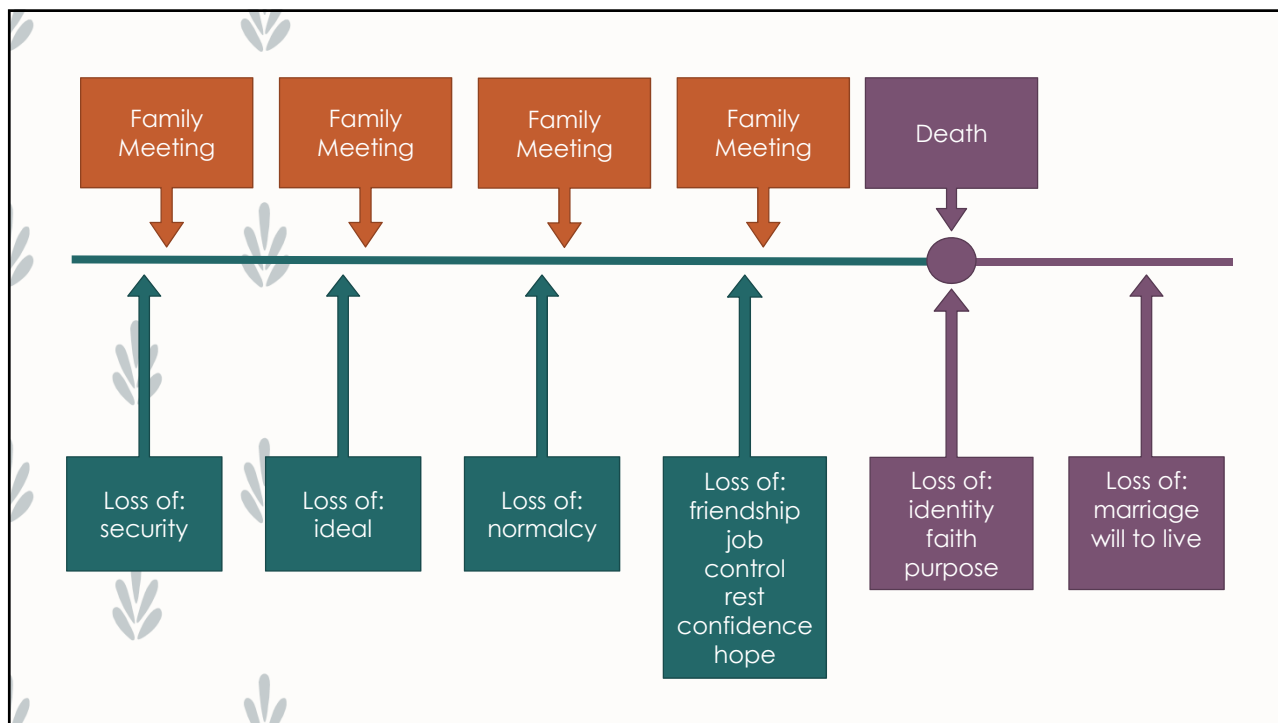
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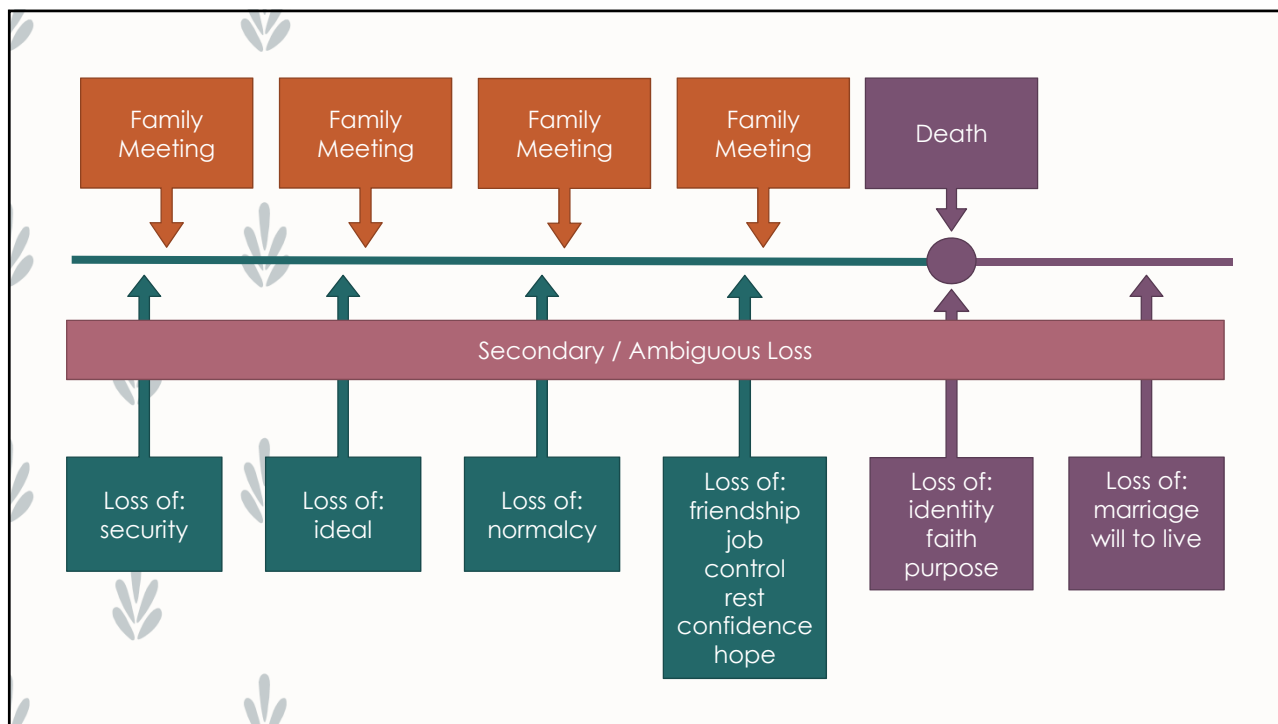
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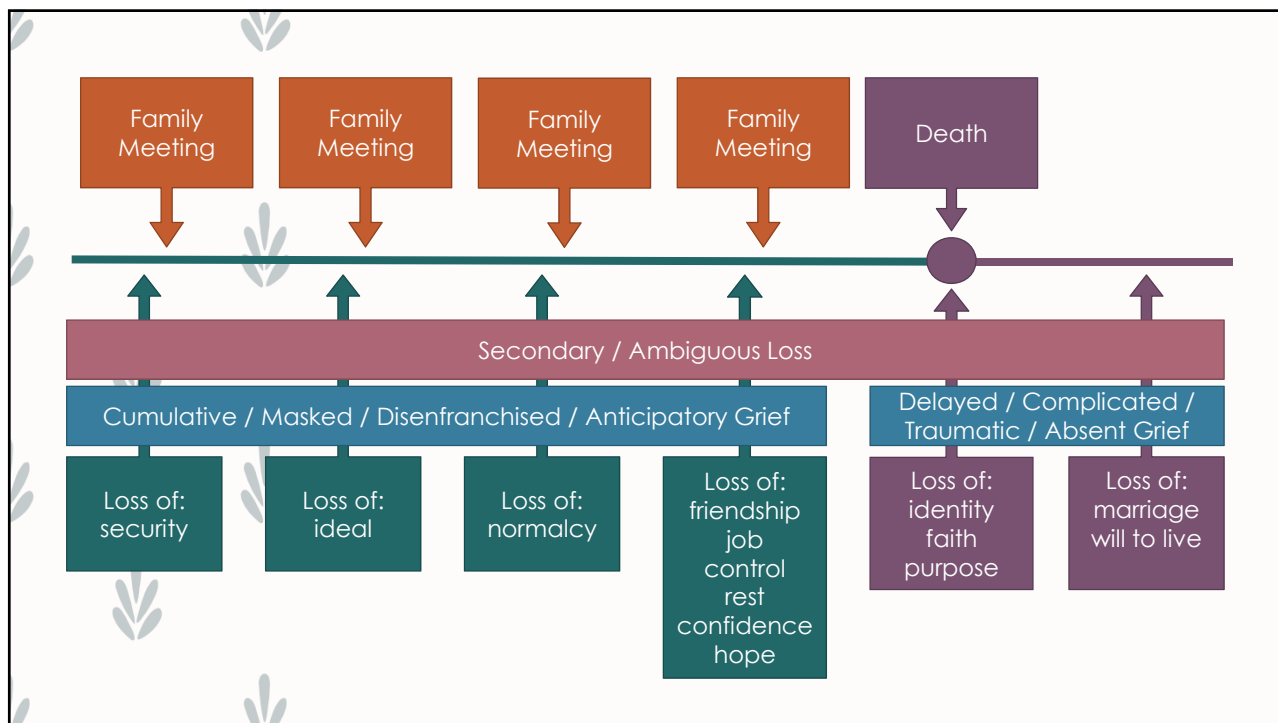
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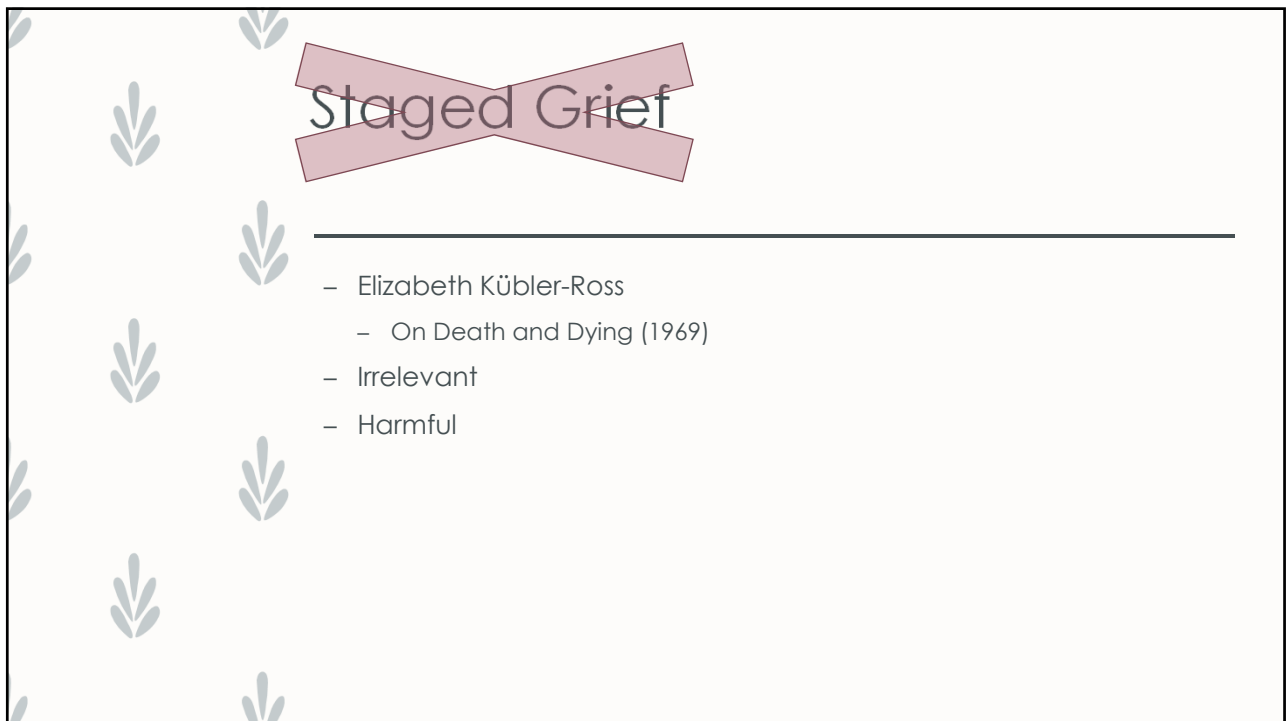
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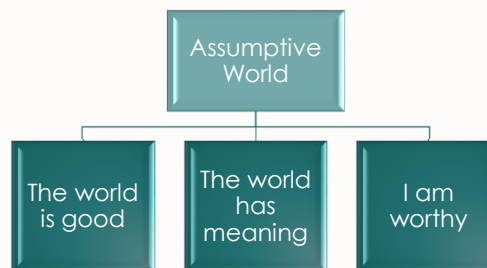
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## Helpful Grief Theory

- Assumptive Worlds Theory
  - Parkes (1971)
  - Janoff-Bulman (1989)



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- Continuing Bonds
  - Klass, Silverman & Nickman (2014)



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## The Facts

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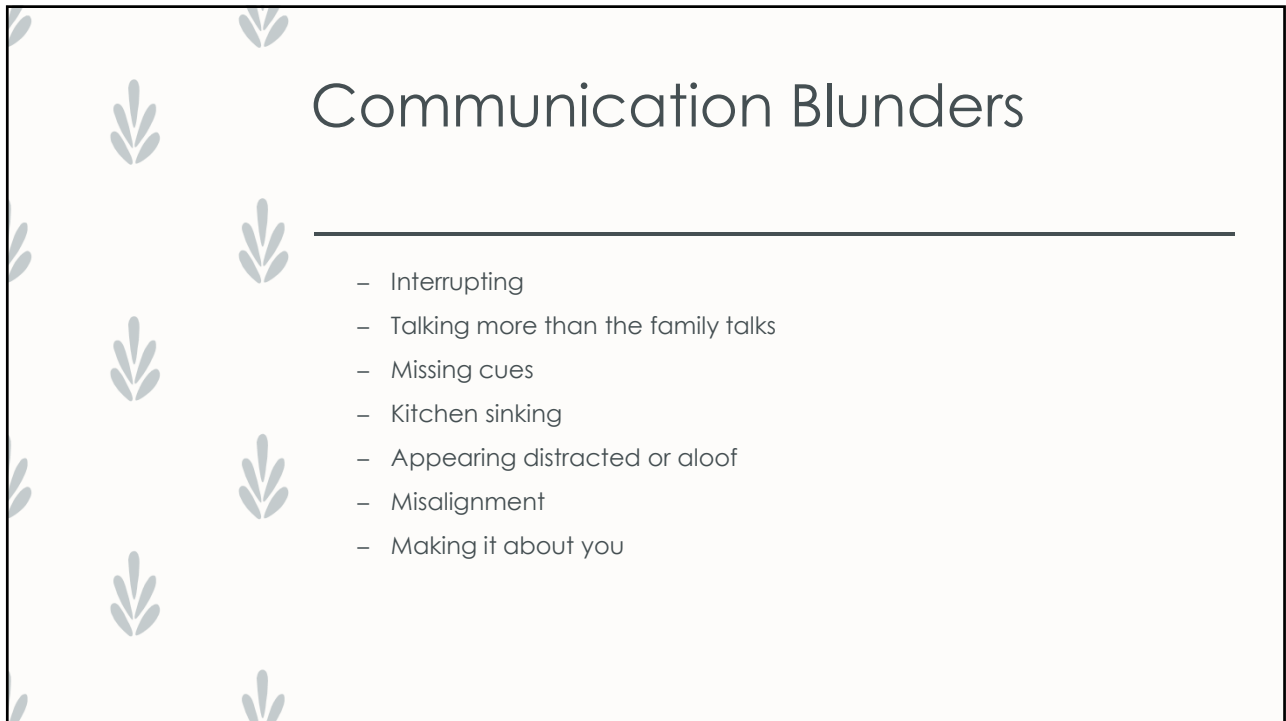
- Grief cannot be staged
- Grief has no time constraints
- There is no wrong way to grieve
  - There are harmful ways to cope
- Increased morbidity and mortality
- Well meaning people can say stupid things

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## Communication Pearls

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- Ask and be silent
  - "What has this been like for you?"
  - "What are your worries?"
  - "What are your hopes?"
  - "How can I be helpful?"
  - "What else?"
- Validation
  - "A lot of families I've talked to..."
  - "I can see how much you love..."
  - "I can't imagine what this is like for you."
  - "I'm here for you."

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## Cultural Considerations

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- Ask how they prefer to receive information
- Respect
- Leave judgment behind

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## Spiritual and Emotional Support

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- Everyone is spiritual, not everyone is religious
  - Consult your Chaplain!
- The rollercoaster and mixed bag
  - Consult your Social Worker!
  - Consult your Child Life Specialist!
- Extremes
  - Consult Psychology!
  - Consult Psychiatry!

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## Interdisciplinary Team

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- United front
- Grief is multi-dimensional, as should be our care

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## Palliative Care

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- Two types
  - Perinatal
  - Pediatric
- Services
  - Additional layer of support
  - Concurrent care
  - Pain and symptom management
  - Psychosocial support
  - Complex medical decision making

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## When a Baby Dies

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- Traumatic versus peaceful
- Avoidant versus involved
- Harmful versus supportive

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## Legacy Building

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- "A person's a person no matter how small" -Dr. Seuss



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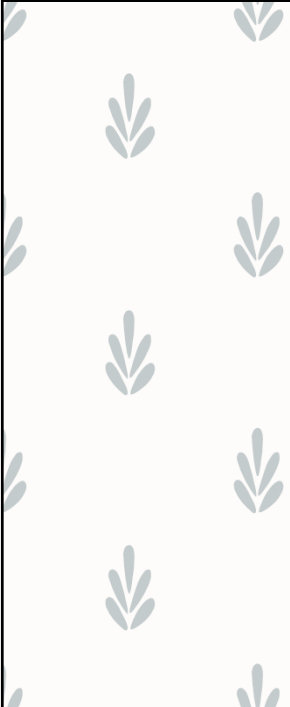


## Logistical Support

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- Grief resources
- Disposition planning
- Not uncommon to begin during anticipatory grief
- Referrals

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## Follow-Up Support

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- Evidence Based Practice
- Imperative
- Personal
- Multi-dimensional

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## The Key

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- compassion

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## Paraphrased Glossary

reference: [www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)

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- **4 Tasks of Mourning:** The work of grief that promotes coping with a death.
- **Absent Grief:** The display or experience of no "typical" grief reactions after a loss.
- **Ambiguous Loss:** The loss of something existential or intangible, also when someone is physically present but psychologically absent or the reverse.
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- **Assumptive Worlds Theory:** When a person experiences the breakdown of their ideal good, meaningful world or their own worth.
- **Continuing Bonds:** The experience of a spiritual connection to a dead loved one.
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- **Secondary Loss:** Any loss that occurs due to an initial loss.
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Questions and Comments

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