

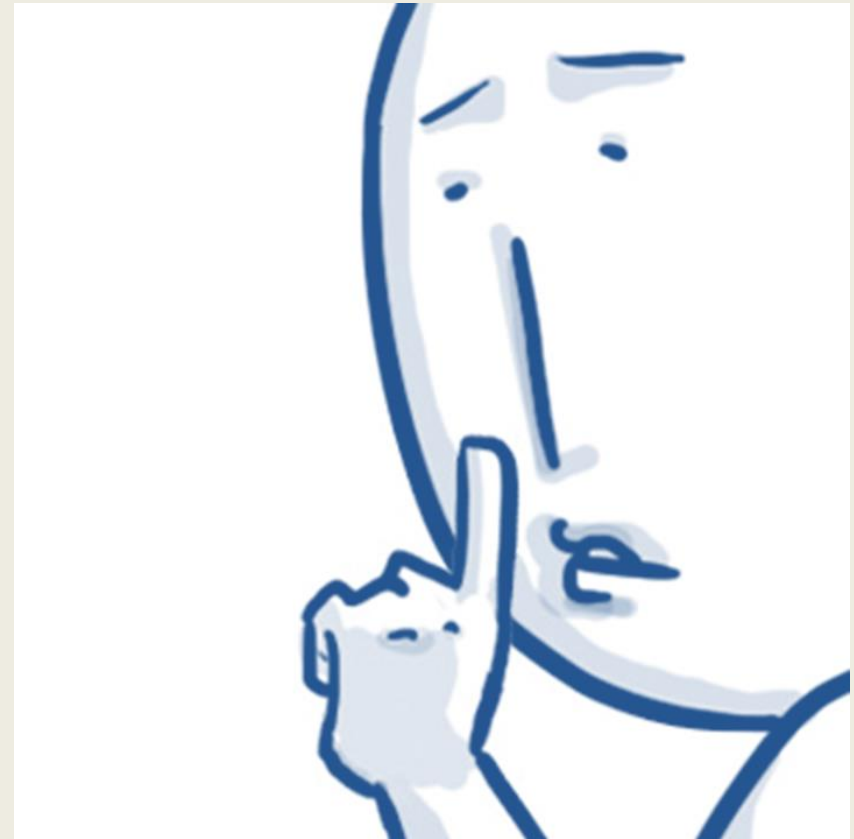
Crying in Secret: Dealing with Disenfranchised Grief

有哀難言：不被認可的哀傷

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What hinders the bereaved people from expressing their grief?

Miscarriage

個胎仲甘細，都未有咩感情，
唔駛甘傷心！

你仲後生，
無左再生過個啦！



Pet Loss

有無搞錯，
你阿爺死時你都無甘傷心！

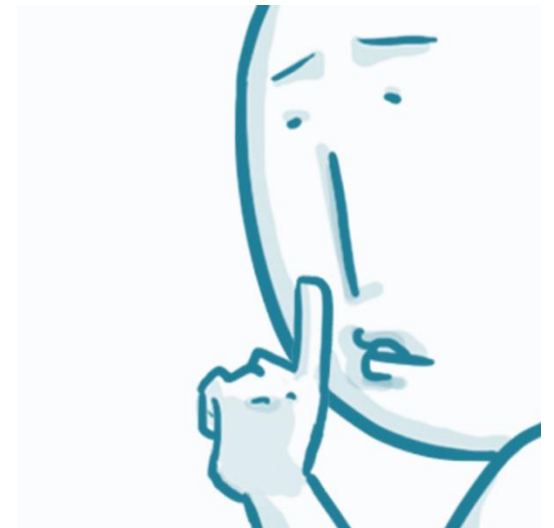
死隻狗咋喎，
駛唔駛甘傷心呀！



Disenfranchised Grief

(Doka, 1989 & 2002)

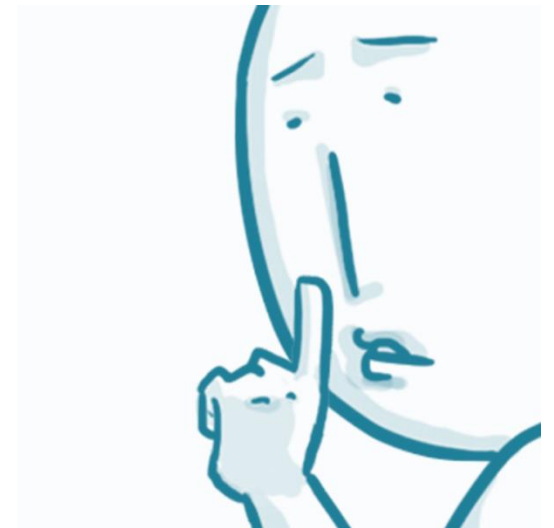
- Grievors are not accorded a “right to grieve”, so that the grief is not openly acknowledged, socially validated, or publicly observed.



Contexts of Disenfranchised Grief

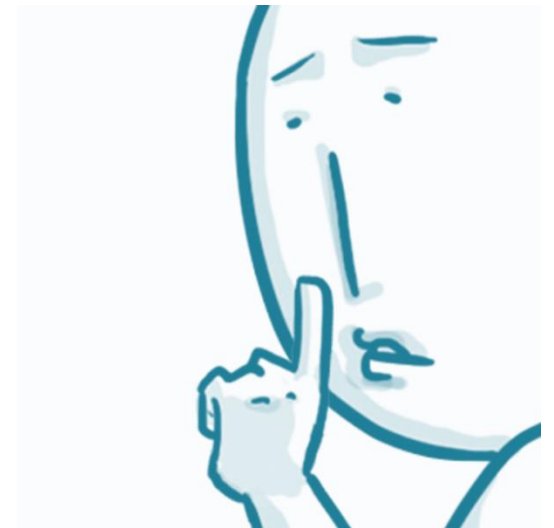
(Doka, 1989 & 2002)

- Relationship is not recognized
- Loss is not recognized
- Griever is not recognized
- Circumstances of death
- Ways of individuals grieve



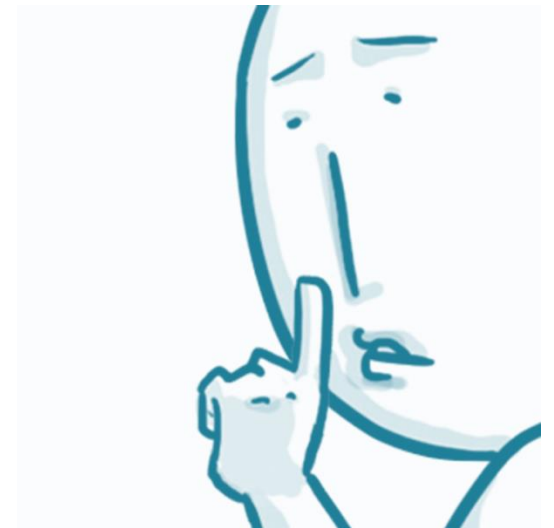
Relationship is not recognized

- When the relationships are non-traditional, thought not to be close enough, or their full implications are not appreciated
 - Extra-marital affairs
 - Homosexual partners
 - Ex-spouses
 - Caregivers / Therapists
 - Celebrity



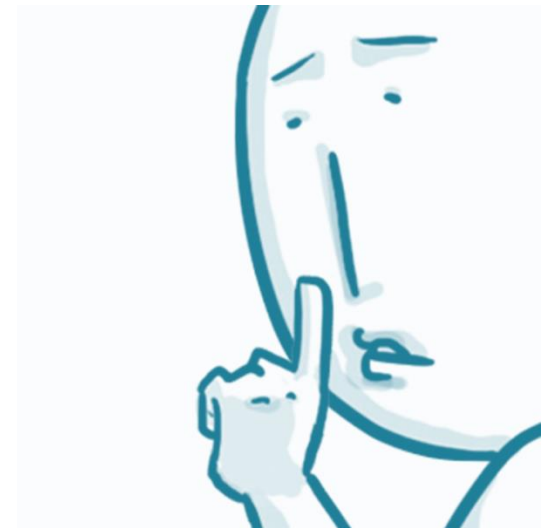
Loss is not recognized

- Failure to recognize that the death as a significant loss
 - Perinatal deaths
 - Abortions
 - Miscarriage
 - Pet loss



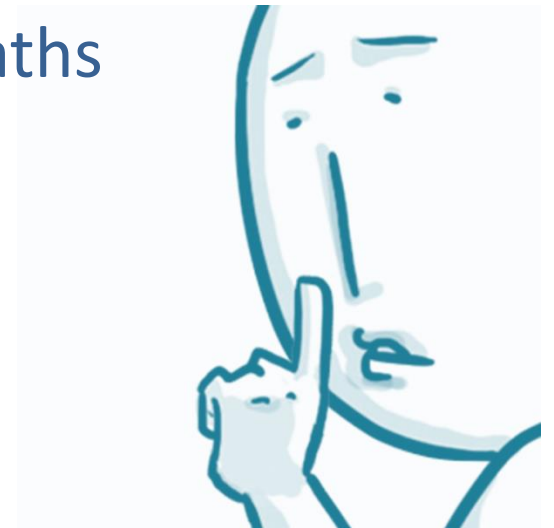
Griever is not recognized

- Failure to acknowledge that the persons are capable of grieving
 - Young children
 - People with mental disabilities
 - Elderly with Dementia



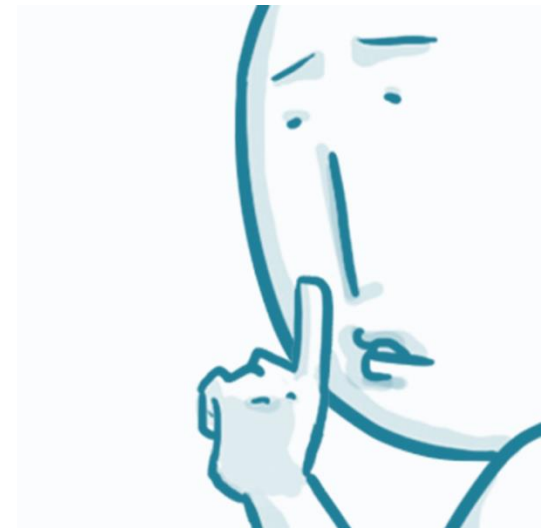
Circumstances of death

- When the nature of death inhibits either solicitation of support by the bereaved or offering of support by others
 - Suicides
 - Deaths from AIDS
 - Other stigmatized diseases or deaths



Ways individuals grieve

- Styles of experiencing and expressing grief clash with the expectations of others
 - Instrumental grievers Vs. Intuitive grievers





Mourners may experience different disenfranchisements at different contexts at the same time.

All grief becomes disenfranchised over time.

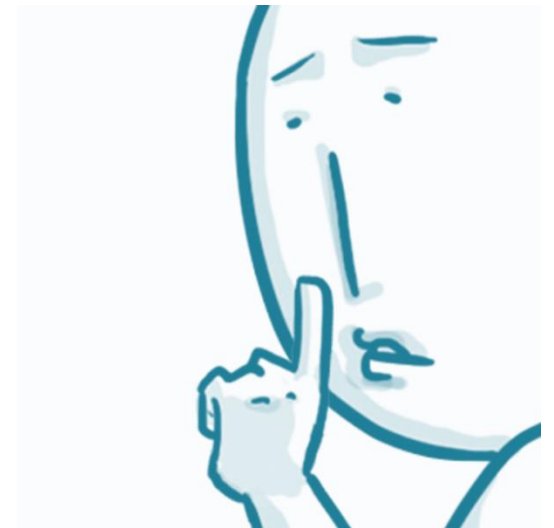


When death is still a strong taboo in the society, all grief experiences can be disenfranchised too.



Impacts on the Grievers

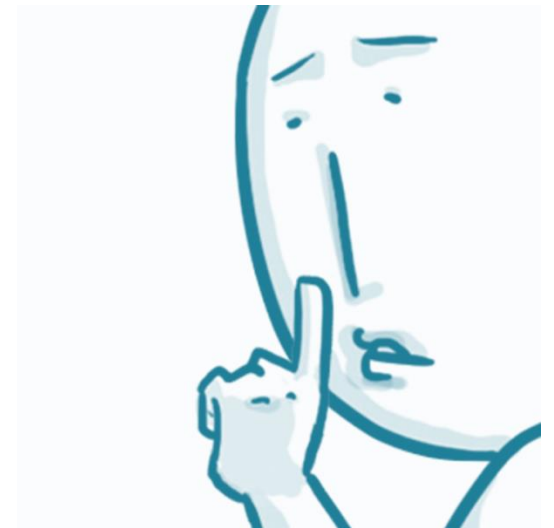
- Difficulty in acknowledging and making sense of the death
 - Failure to be involved in funerals or related rituals
 - Failure to mourn or verbally discuss openly
- Complications of emotions:
 - Suppression of emotions
 - Ambivalence
 - Emotions being intensified
- Lack of social supports



Empathic failure

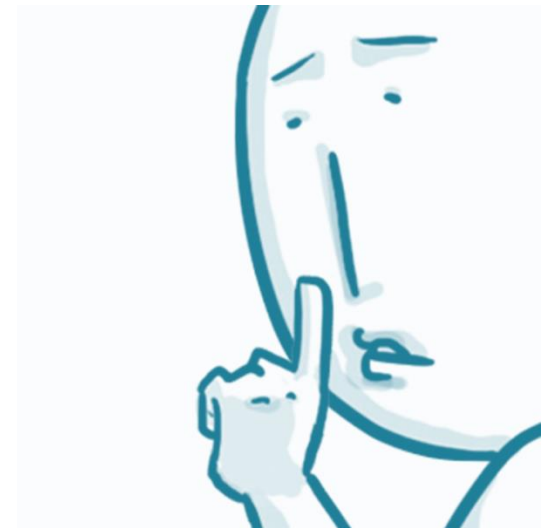
(Neimeyer & Jordan, 2002)

- Disenfranchisement of grief
 - = An expression of empathic failure
 - i.e., Failure of one part of a system to understand the meaning and experience of the others
 - Self with Self
 - Self with Family
 - Self with Larger Community
 - Self with Transcendent Reality



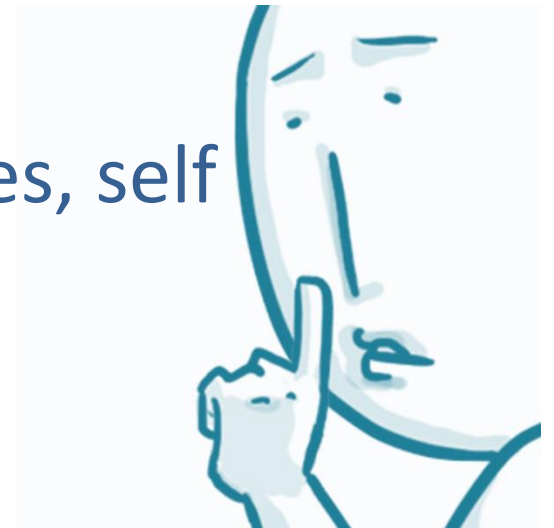
Intervention as Empathic Bridging

- Promote dialogue across the interface at which empathic failure occurs



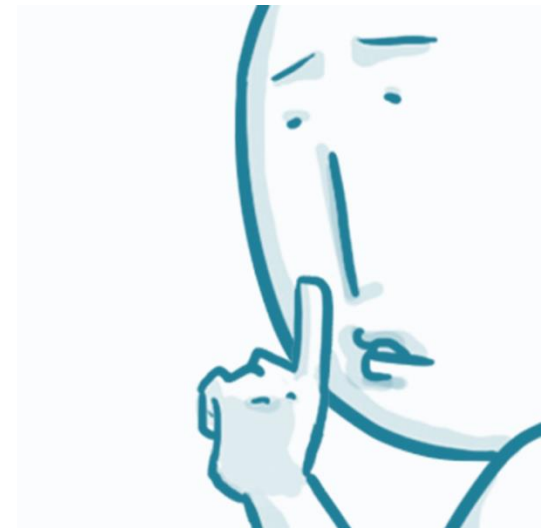
Self with Self

- Empathic failure with reference to self by denying, disowning or disapproving of parts of own grief experience, e.g., guilt vs. anger in suicide bereavement
 - ➔ Help client to access, symbolize, explore these previously neglected feelings
 - ➔ Promote intrapersonal dialogues, self recognition and acceptance



Self with Family

- When one member or subgroup within family system fails to allow or accept divergent bereavement responses of other family members
 - ➔ Joint session that promotes mutual understanding
 - ➔ Family rituals



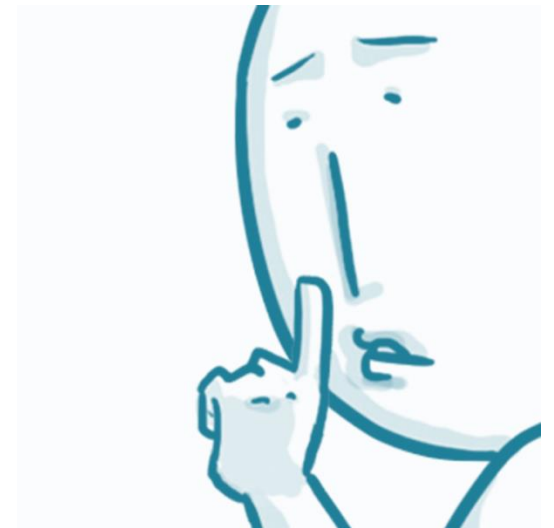
Self with Larger Community

- Grief become unrecognized in the community context or failure to comply with the community expectations
 - ➔ Community education in prevention or intervention phase
 - ➔ Empower the mourners to be proactive and assertive with own needs
 - ➔ Communal rituals



Self with Transcendent Reality

- Disconnection and sense of abandonment/rejection by the higher power
 - ➔ Promote spiritual and existential quest
 - ➔ Both secular and pastoral/religious counseling can be helpful





We should not assume, expect or instruct
how one should grieve.
Instead, we respect, understand and support.

Thank you.

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