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LISTENING TO PARENTS IN PAIN

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OUTLINE

- Pain, grief and loss
- Practicalities of speaking with parents in pain
- Painful feelings that may be present
- Characteristics of helpful professionals
- What to do in the presence of pain
- Conclusions

PAIN, GRIEF AND LOSS

What is pain?

- Physical component
- Emotional component

What are grief and loss?

Worden (1991) model:

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss.
- Adjust to an environment without the person who has died
- Invest in the new reality

MODEL OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Worden (1991)

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss.
- Adjust to an environment without the person who has died
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PRACTICALITIES OF SPEAKING WITH PARENTS IN PAIN

- Physical setting
- How to begin
- Conversation starters / door openers

CONVERSATION STARTERS / DOOR OPENERS

- Describe
- Invite
- Silence
- Attentive

PAINFUL FEELINGS THAT MAY BE PRESENT

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Despair
- Shame
- Guilt
- Anger
- Denial

Further indicators of pain

HOW TO BE HELPFUL

- Characteristics of a helpful professional
- What to do in the presence of parents in pain

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HELPFUL PROFESSIONAL

- Open
- Accepting
- Professional philosophy
- Curiosity
- Respect
- Understanding

WHAT TO DO IN THE PRESENCE OF PARENTS IN PAIN

- Listen

Good listening is active - not a passive pause in your own running commentary. (*Halberstam, 1994*)

- Acknowledge
- Comfortable silence
- Avoid quick solutions
- Noticing changes
- Personal meaning
- Self-awareness
- Check in
- Sit with pain

CONCLUSIONS

- Your ability to recognise painful feelings and sit with them will help parents move with and beyond the pain to do what they need to help their child
- Building and refining your ability to recognise and respond to different emotions will promote stronger bonds with parents and place you in a better position to help them
- Practising these skills in other contexts will enhance your relationships generally and improve your capacity to help parents