

Grief

1. How long ago was the bereavement?
2. Ask about the circumstances of death? How did the person die? Was the death sudden and unexpected or expected?
3. Were you able to say good-bye?
4. How old was the person?
5. What was your relationship like?
6. Did you attend the funeral? How did you cope?
7. If deceased was the spouse/partner, how long were you together?
8. How do you feel about your loss?
9. Do you feel angry/guilty?
10. Do you blame your self for anything? Why?
11. Are you able to speak about your loss?
12. Have you been to the grave?
13. Do you ever feel that he or she is close by?
14. When loved ones die people often find it hard to put away their belongings and keep them as if they were still alive. Have you managed to put away his/her possessions?
15. Do you still set a place for him/her at mealtime?
16. Enquire about social support (family and friends). How often do you see them?
17. Have you managed to continue with your hobbies?
18. How do you see the future? Have you thought of ending it all?
19. Ask about depressive symptoms and duration?
20. If delusions of widowhood present enquire about other psychotic symptoms
21. Past psychiatric history?
22. Alcohol and substance abuse?
23. Do you smoke? Are you smoking more now?

Abnormal grief

Inhibited grief: Absence of expected grief at any stage

Delayed grief: The first stage (denial) does not set in by three weeks after death

Prolonged or chronic grief: It lasts longer than 6 months

Abnormally intense grief: Unusually intense symptoms

Treatment

1. Bereavement counselling
Involves working through stages of grief. Patients are encouraged to get on with the final acts like viewing the body or grave of the deceased and put away the belongings. Social activities and talking about their loss is encouraged.
2. Support group: CRUSE and Compassionate Friends
3. Medication: Hypnotic, anxiolytics or antidepressants
4. Guided mourning
The bereaved need to feel that their grief is expressible and hearable. Some patients need encouragement to face reminders of their grief. Patients are encouraged to confront memories of the deceased in a controlled environment