

# **Unconventional Grief as It Relates to Parents of Children with Mental Illness**

## **Program Description**

Parents and children can experience grief even when there is no death involved. This type of grief is often named “unconventional grief.” One element of grief is the reaction to loss, not the loss itself. When parenting a child with mental illness, parents often experience many emotions. These emotions can often be more powerful and confusing than the grieving process for someone who has recently passed away.

When parents cannot change or control their child or the situation, emotions intensify. Unconventional grief is unique and deserves a tailored approach to being understood as well as treated. It is important to remember that finding support from other parents in a similar situation can help with feeling alone. This topic is worth exploring and finding out the sometimes-unique challenges and how to address those challenges with clients and/or loved ones.

There is not much information specifically on unconventional grief and how to recognize it and treat it. That is one reason I wanted to present this important topic.

## **Program Objectives**

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

- Explain the difference between grief, bereavement, and mourning.
- Define traditional grief and identify stages of traditional grief.
- Define unconventional grief and identify stages of unconventional grief.
- Distinguish the differences between traditional and unconventional grief.
- Examine other causes of unconventional grief, beyond mental illness and why unconventional grief happens.
- Discuss components of unconventional grief: emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, cultural, spiritual, and philosophical.
- Identify support, resources, and hope for those enduring unconventional grief.

## **Target Audience**

Social Workers, Mental Health Professionals, Child Welfare Parent Coaches, Parent Education Facilitators, Social Work and Mental Health Therapy Students/Interns and any other interested individuals.

## **Contact Hours**

3.0 contact hours

## **Program Agenda (On Line)**

11:25 AM – 11:40 AM

11:40 AM – 11:50 AM

11:50 AM – 11:55 PM

11:55 AM – 12:05 PM

Facilitator Introduction, Logistics, Agenda, My Story

Introductions of participants and Challenge Your Knowledge

Slides: Definition of Mental Illness for today’s training

Video Family Anguish Over Mentally Ill Children/Breakout room activity and discussion/whiteboard

12:05 PM – 12:10 PM	Video 60min Overtime The stigma of raising a mentally ill child/discussion.
12:10 PM – 12:15 PM	Slides: What is grief, bereavement, and mourning?
12:15 PM – 12:40 PM	Video Time to Talk: A Parent’s perspective on a child with mental illness/Discussion.
12:40 PM – 12:50 PM	Slides: Elisabeth Kubler Ross
12:50 PM – 12:55 PM	What causes grief and what are the stages?
12:55 PM – 1:05 PM	Break
1:05 PM - 1:15 PM	Video How Grief Affects your Brain and What to Do about it/Discussion/Slide of normal vs abnormal brain.
1:15 PM – 1:35 PM	What is Unconventional Grief/slides/discussion.
1:35 PM – 1:40 PM	Discuss components and give examples of each component of unconventional grief.
1:40 PM – 2:00 PM	Interview Videos and Discussion
2:00 PM – 2:10 PM	Video The Grief of Loving Someone with Mental Illness/Discussion
2:10 PM – 2:15 PM	Video How do you help a grieving friend/Discussion.
2:15 PM – 2:25 PM	Support/Treatment/Wrap Up

**Faculty**

**Kitty Hart, MSW**, is an Adoption Social Worker/Human Services Senior Practitioner with Wake County Human Services. She describes herself as unofficially interested in being a “helper” since she started volunteer work at age 4 years, with her mother. She has been volunteering since then and when it came time to find a major for college, social work came naturally. Kitty is also an adoptive mother of an adult daughter and three fur babies. She is a true animal lover and loves the beach. Kitty volunteers at Safe Child teaching parent education groups. Kitty has a passion for working with the prevention of child sexual abuse and parenting education. She teaches a prevention of child sexual abuse class and trauma informed parenting groups. Kitty has been a CPS social worker for 23 years.