

# 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.

## 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 unconditional 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.
- What might treatment look like for the parent? For the child?
- Identify support, resources and hope for those enduring unconventional grief.
- Provide support for clients who experience this type of grief
- Advocate for appropriate services for a parent in this situation and self-care

## 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

5.0 contact hours

## Program Agenda

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Registration
9:20 AM – 9:35 AM	Facilitator Introduction and Logistics
9:35 AM – 9:55 AM	Introductions of participants and Pre-test
9:55 AM – 10:30 AM	What is grief, bereavement, and mourning?
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	Break
10:45 AM - 11:15 AM	What causes grief and what are the stages?
11:15 AM - 12:00 Noon	Scenario/Video. Scenario of Child w/mental health issues vs. Child w/out mental health issues and discuss.

12:00 PM – 12:30 PM	Discuss components and give examples of each component of unconventional grief.
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM	Professional Mental Health Treatment and Professional Support
2:30 PM – 2:45 PM	Resources in your county. In our State.
2:45 PM – 3:00 PM	Break
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Self-Care for parents. What might this look like? Generate a list.
3:15 PM – 4:00 PM	Wrap Up/Post-test/Evaluation/Give certificates

**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 four fur babies. She is a true animal lover, has been a vegetarian for the last 3.5 years and loves the beach. 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 nearly 20 years.