

Ambiguous Loss

February 23, 2023

Dr. Michelle Krehbiel & Glennis McClure,
Presenters

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Agenda

- Introductions
- Shared agreement
- Family stress
- Ambiguous loss
- Building resilience
- Getting professional help
- Questions



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Introductions

- Name
- Location
- Occupation
- Questions about or interested in this topic



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Shared agreement

- The conversation that happens here will only be shared in this space
- Listen to each other, offer compassion
- Create a safe space to learn, ask questions, and collaborate
- Feedback and questions are always welcome
- Practice self-care as need



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Acknowledgements

Work is based on A Changing Way of Life: Ambiguous Loss and Farming created by the University of Minnesota Extension



Funding is provided by The North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center, supported by the USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, under the agreement number: 2020-70028-32728



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Family Stress

Family Stress- a disturbance in the steady state of the family system (Boss, 2017) or more simply it is change.

Stress comes from:

- External (work, weather, unemployment)
- Internal (addiction, divorce, death)
- Both

Family stress is normal and bound to happen.



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Discussion- Ambiguous Loss

- What are your thoughts when you hear this term?
- What feelings come to mind?
- What questions do you have about the term?



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Characteristics of Ambiguous Loss



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What is it?

- It is complicated.
- Loss is generally unresolved.
- It remains unclear and without closure.
- Typically, no official validation (rituals) that any loss occurred.

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Characteristics of Ambiguous Loss

How does it feel? How do you cope?

- There are no rituals of support, so families are left on their own to cope.
- Ambiguity freezes the process of grief and prevents cognition, thus, blocking process of coping and decision making.
- Not having definitive information people are immobilized with feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and confusion.



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Types of Ambiguous Loss

Physically absent but kept psychologically present

- There is no proof of death.
- Examples- MIA, disappearances, military deployments, not knowing who your parents are, divorce, desertion, leaving family behind after immigration

Psychologically absent but physically present

- Examples- Dementia, brain injury, serious chronic mental illness, addictions



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What kind of feelings, behaviors, or thoughts might be reactions to Ambiguous Loss?



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Ambiguous Loss Grief

- **Anticipatory grief:**
Realizing a loss is imminent before the loss has occurred
Example: Terminal cancer diagnosis or loss of family farm because of bankruptcy
- **Disenfranchised grief:**
Grief that is not understood or taken seriously
Example: Miscarriage or farm related injury
- **Frozen grief:**
Result of the ambiguity of not yet knowing whether any effort will be successful
Example: Efforts made to salvage some aspect of the farming operation

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Moving Forward

Goals:

- Build resilience to lower stress and anxiety caused by ongoing ambiguity.
- Develop tolerance for living with unanswered questions.
- Two main options
 - Hold out for the truth
 - Develop a new narrative one can live with

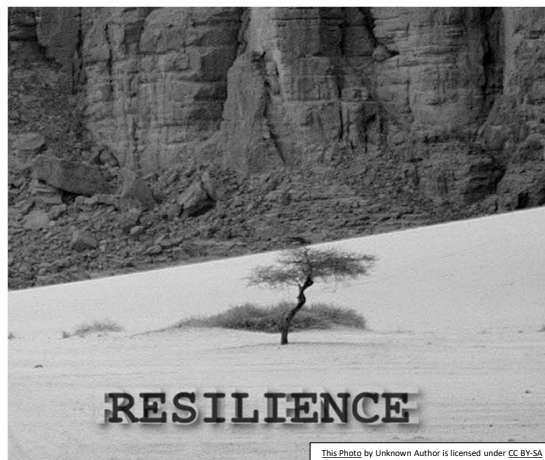


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Building Resilience

- Find meaning
- Re-evaluate or reconstruct identity
- Normalize ambivalence
- Discover hope
- Keep a sense of humor
- Build community



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Tools in your Toolbox



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Evaluate and build one's circle of support

- Self
 - Internal assets
- Other- Family and Friends
- Community
 - Mental health professionals
 - Faith communities
 - Support groups



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Helping Others

- Engage in positive communication
 - Listen
 - Ask open ended questions
 - Be available for conversation
 - Appropriate time and place
 - Offer hope and support



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Suicide Awareness

Signs

- Direct verbal clues
 - "I am going to kill myself."
- Indirect verbal clues
 - "You would be better off without me."
- Behavior clues
 - Putting personal affairs in order
 - Giving away prized possessions
 - Hopelessness
- Situational clues
 - Loss of a major relationship
 - Fear of becoming a burden to others



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Suicide Awareness

What to say

- Have you (are you) thought of harming yourself or trying to take your own life?
- Do you think or feel this way presently?
- Have you thought about how you might do this?

- Be specific, and always ask: In the past three months, have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?

Seek the appropriate professional help and text or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

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Getting Help

- Simply, ask for help
- Use one's circle of support (family, friends, community resources)
- Use community resources- medical/mental health professionals, faith communities, schools, employee resources
- Utilize 988 suicide and crisis lifeline or Rural response hotline 800-464-0258



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Review

- Family stress
- Ambiguous loss
- Building resilience
- Getting help
- Questions



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Questions



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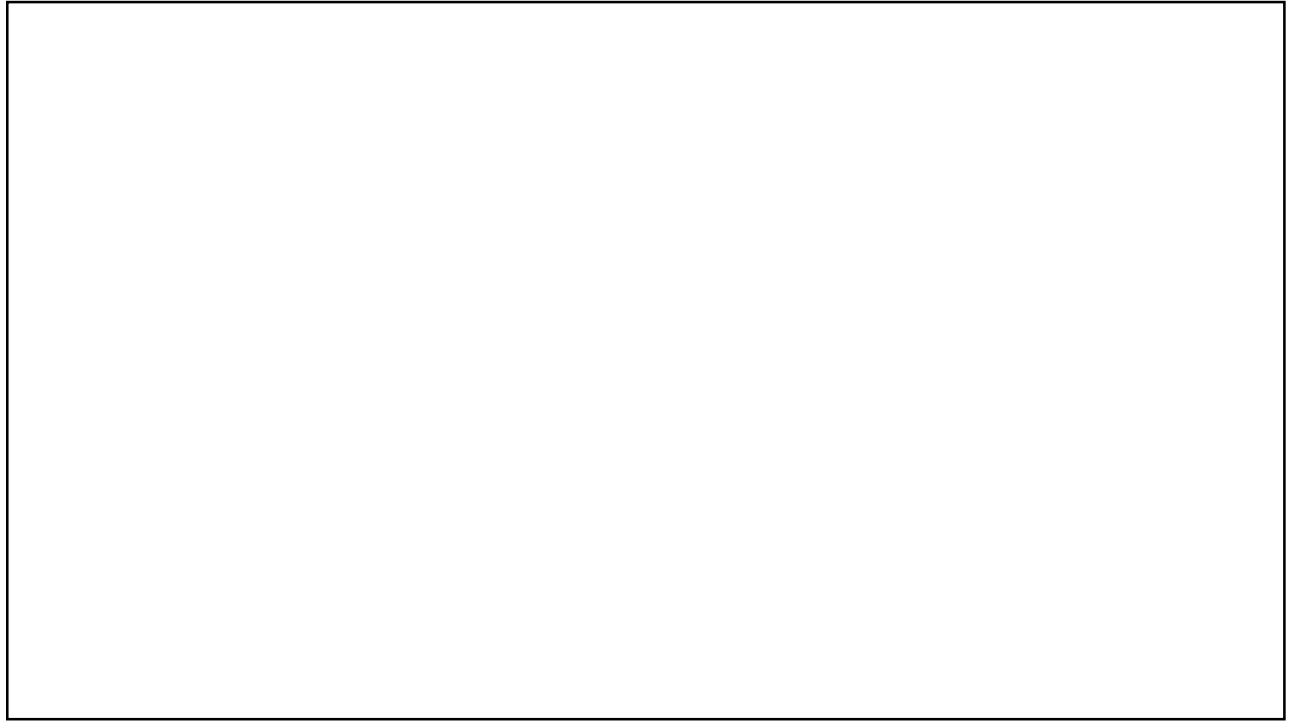
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Contact information

Michelle Krehbiel, PhD
Youth Development Specialist/Professor
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
402-472-9020
Mkrehbiel2@unl.edu



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