

Grief And Loss Among Care Providers And Receivers

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Introduction

As people age, they usually experience multiple losses which make them vulnerable to grief in ways they may not even recognise. In this course, we will be talking about grief from four viewpoints:

- 1) The view of the person with a chronic illness.
- 2) The view of the person with dementia.
- 3) The view of the family carer looking after a person with a chronic illness.
- 4) The view of the family carer looking after a person with dementia.

If you are a *professional carer*, you may experience some of the same grief symptoms as the family carer, especially if you have a strong relationship with the person you are caring for. If you have some other role in a residential care community or an adult day centre, this course will help you to build stronger relationships with your residents/clients and their families by increasing your understanding of what they are experiencing.

Traditionally we think of people as grieving when someone dies, but grieving is really about loss, and people experience many losses as they age, so this course is divided into four sections:

- 1) A description of the grieving process as we understand it.
- 2) Building awareness of the range of losses people are likely to experience.
- 3) Ideas for helping people to cope, no matter where they are in the grieving process.
- 4) Ideas for a residential care community or adult day centre memorial service.

Part 1: Grieving Is A Process

Let's begin with a story...

Two men were fishing. Their luck was incredible. They caught more fish than they had ever caught before. As the sun was going down and they started to pack up, one fisherman said to the other, "You'd better mark this place."

When they got back to the dock, the first fisherman said, "Did you mark the place?"

The second fisherman said, "I did. I put an 'X' on the side of the boat just over the lucky spot."

"But," sputtered the first fisherman, "how do you know we're going to be able to rent the same boat tomorrow?"

What on earth does that joke have to do with grief and loss? Let me explain...

Firstly, one of the elements of humour is surprise. Not all jokes have a surprise ending, but some do. This one does. You would expect the fisherman who suggested his partner mark the good fishing spot to be upset that he marked the side of the boat and not the actual position in the water, but instead,