
Video reviews

Tape details

Ratings

*** highly recommended
** recommended
* worth looking at
0 no rating

Audience

P psychiatrists
M multidisciplinary
UG undergraduate
PG postgraduate

Helping people grieve – the role of the health worker

Grieving is a normal human reaction; it demonstrates the importance one person has for another. Relationships give shape to human life, providing recognition, personal and biological fulfilment, the opportunity to love and be loved, the creation of networks and shared interest, and the expression of social concern. Relationships can also be the source of frustration, limitation and inhibition. A lack of relationships engenders disturbing feelings of isolation, alienation and depersonalisation. Along with work, play and belief, relationships give purpose and meaning to human life. Grief is a common feeling but one that many struggle with alone and which may be slow to pass, leaving a legacy of unresolved, disabling reactions.

Helping people grieve is one of two videos produced by the Clinical Psychology Department of Gwent Community Health in partnership with Production House, a specialist in health care videos. Over 30 minutes, this well-produced tape introduces the viewer to the phenomenon of grief, the principles of management and some illustrations of practice. The target audience is the health care professional. The video is varied in style and pace which makes for easy viewing. Typically, a scene is set in an extract from a session, talked about by the clinician, the key practice points being then presented in tabular form and voice-over. Finally, either the therapy is taken a step further or the grieving person looks back on their experience. Examples of 'numbness' and unresolved grief are presented. The tone is sympathetic and positive.

This tape takes a person-centred and problem-solving approach. It would make a good base for small group discussion. It recognises that there is no set path for grief, an important practice point in itself. Beneficially, the recognition and expression of feelings is legitimised and the value of listening underlined. The process in which protest at the loss surfaces in anger with others is only mentioned in passing and should have been given greater prominence. Some losses are defin-

ing events in particular lives and remain so. Understanding that and why is part of the helper's role.

Tape details

Production: Gwent Community Health Trust
Distribution: Production House, Gwent
Details: Video; 30 mins; 1995; £23.38
Rating: ***
Audience: M, UG

MARK AVELINE, *Psychotherapy Department, Mapperley Hospital, Nottingham*

Step by step: helping yourself to cope with panic

This is a curate's egg of a video. The personal accounts of panic are realistic, clear and even inspiring, while the guidelines for graded exposure are thorough, concise and will prove valuable to the majority of viewers. These two strong points are, however, insufficient to commend the video.

The introduction to, and explanation of, panic is not very clear and the graphics are distractingly garish. This part of the video is saved only by the excellent accounts given by sufferers who are often clearer in formulating the model of panic than are the expert commentators.

The first of the panic management techniques, graded exposure, is very well explained. The technique is clearly outlined using a sound rationale, well defined steps and relevant, simple graphics. A sensitive case example makes the technique even more accessible to the viewer. Sadly, other coping strategies are less well conveyed.

As the narrators say, the most salient components of a panic attack are the physiological and cognitive aspects and these are the most poorly addressed. The rationale for introducing controlled breathing and relaxation to combat hyperventilation and muscular tension was obscure and the techniques muddled and possibly unhelpful. I would be unhappy about advocating the breathing technique used by the therapist in the video as the explanation was inadequate and the prescribed technique of breath holding combined with controlled breathing is unnecessary and can be distressing to clients with the