

A memorial quilt for Asian grief and loss



Implications for Grief work and Counselling
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How Asian see death?

- Death is part of natural life.
- Some Asian see death as extinction while most of them see death as a beginning of life after death.



Asian understanding of death

- Grief and mourning is relational and familial.
- The view of life and death was deeply influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.



How Asian see death?

- Death is a taboo. Death brings bad luck.
- Good death and Bad Death



Good Death

- Died at a ripe age
- Died with their eyes closed
- Died at home; home country
- Died for the sake of the nation or family



Good Death

- Surrounding by family, especially sons and grandsons
- Finishing family obligations
- Fulfilling last wishes



Bad Death

- Sudden, unnatural, untimely, traumatic death
- Died at a foreign place
- No sending off by the family members
- A result of a person's or family members' misdeeds in a past life
- Bad luck and shame
- Much simplified ceremonies and different funeral rituals

Confucianism

- **“ While you do not know life, how can you know about death” said Confucius.**
- Confucianism believe that if one handled things in life properly, death is not horrible.
- Family obligations are emphasized in grieving and mourning.

Taoism

- Dying is part of the rhythm of nature.
- There is life after death.
- Taoism death rituals provide many ways of summon and pacify the dead soul for transformation to the life after death.

Buddhism

- Life is full of suffering and death is one of them.
- There is life after death.
- Good death implies a life full of good deeds and virtues which may lead to smooth reincarnation.



Asian mourning rituals

- Asian mourning rituals often involves funeral and post funeral rituals.
- Traditionally, mourning rituals last for three years but nowadays it has been shorten to 49 days or less.
- Specific tasks for family members to carry out provides structure and sense of mastery to hold on.
- A channel to express their feelings of grief.

Asian mourning rituals

- To fulfill filial obligation to pave the way for the deceased move into next world smoothly
- The elaborate rituals can be exhausting and pressuring to the bereaved.

Filial piety is highly valued

- Helping them to fulfill their filial and family obligation
- Facilitating the dying and the family to show appreciation and seek forgiveness to each other if it is necessary.



Fulfilling family obligation

- To let and facilitate family members to participate in caring for the patient is an act of fulfilling their family responsibility.
- To help them to witness the moment of death of their loved one.

Death Avoidance/Denial

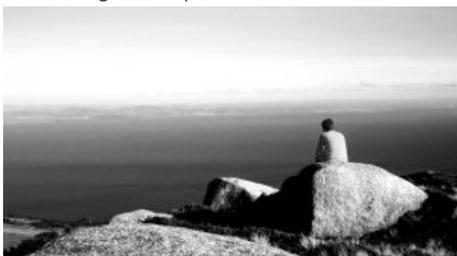
- Death or dying anxiety
- Reservation about coping and facing death directly
- Reluctance of discussing impending death
- It may lead to unprepared, subsequent lifelong regrets, self blame and prolonged grief after bereavement.

Grief awareness

- No exact translation for the term "grief" in Chinese.
- Grief work is a foreign term to Asian
- Low awareness of grief process or grief work

Disenfranchised grief

- Asian immigrant experience



Continuing Bond

- Maintenance of a bond with the deceased is accepted in Asian grieving
- it is sustained in Asian cultural bereavement behaviours and the rituals.



Continuing Bond

- To Asian, the continuing bond does not seem to prevent the survivors from making new attachments nor does it lead to unresolved grief or pathological grief.

The tie to the deceased

- Silverman and Klass (1966) pointed out that continuing bonds can provide comfort, solace, a sense of continuity, support and enhancement of self-esteem for the bereaved.

Disadvantages

- It may prolong the grief
- It may become a burden to the survivors.

The extent to which is helpful or otherwise depends upon the way in which the bereaved transform or reconstruct the ties with deceased.

Implication to counselling Asian bereaved clients

1. The conventional western notions of "proper grieving" may not suit Asian ways of coping with grief.
2. Be culturally sensitive and don't pathologize
3. The focus of diagnosis:
The nature of the bonds and their effects

Implication to counselling Asian bereaved clients

4. The focus of counselling:
 - Facilitating clients in relocating the relationship with the deceased in a healthy way
 - Using culturally appropriate rituals within their belief system to facilitate grief process.

Model of Grief Counselling for Asian people

1. Engaging stage:
 - Increasing grief awareness and available resources by education, seminars/ preventive groups/Outreach.
 - Providing practical help as early intervention
 - Building up rapport and providing care and support

Model of Grief Counselling for Asian people

II. Working stage:

1. Actualizing the loss.
2. Facilitating them to express their suppressing feelings and thoughts of grief in their own ways.
3. Allocating the meaning of the loss experience
4. Relocating and transforming the bond with the deceased in order to move on with life.
5. Regaining a sense of control and mastery to cope with changes and reinvesting in life.
6. Utilizing their family, social and cultural support

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Ending may be a sign of starting another chapter of life.

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