Healing, Hope, & Wholeness
On the Therapeutic Journey

Cindy S. Spillers, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota Duluth

MSHA April 10-11, 2015
Minneapolis, MN

Introduction

Where did these ideas come from?

Questions I Asked

- Where does resilience come from?
- What mysterious force allows transformations to happen?
- What enables people to face what life has put before them?
- What gives people the strength to get up and do what needs to be done?

Dedicated to the Memory of
LaVonne Jackson Levar
August 9, 1956
January 18, 2015

Healing, Hope, Wholeness
Thesis

- Many clients feel a metaphorical punch in the gut
  - A dream has died
  - Need to separate selves from the dream
- Grieving journey is a healing path
- Hope is the energy force that gives people the will and the way to make the journey
The Grief Response

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.”
Langston Hughes

Overview of Grief and Grieving

What do we do when a dream is shattered?
- Consequences of holding fast to a shattered dream
- Grieving allows us to separate from the loss, heal broken heart, and re-engage with our life

Defining Grieving (Ken Moses)
- “Process whereby an individual separates from a significant lost dream, fantasy, illusion, or projection into the future.”
- Purpose: to separate from the lost dream and use the loss for growth and enrichment.

Types of Losses (Holland, 2007)
- Real loss
- Symbolic loss
- Ambiguous loss

The Work of Grieving
- Grief is a soul journey
- Each state allows us to do soul work necessary for healing
- Hope provides the energy we need for this exhausting work
- No fixed linear stages; fluid states
Ken Moses’ Model of Grieving States (Moses, 1989)

Denial
- Shock & disbelief
- Nobody is prepared to have their lives disrupted
- Purpose: allows people to buy time, find internal strength & external resources
- One person’s denial is another’s hope

Anxiety
- Overwhelmed, confused, & inadequately prepared
- Making changes requires tremendous amount of energy
- Purpose: generating and collecting together energy needed to make changes

Fear
- Common human response to the unknown
- Purpose: allows us to withdraw inward to do the work of inner change

Depression
- Not OK in our culture
- “A moment of surrender when we realize it’s time to become someone new” (Chittister, 2003)
- Redefine
  - Competence
  - Value
  - Capability
  - Potency (personal power)
Guilt
- Appears early; resolved late
- Need to answer “Why?” for culpability & moral responsibility
- Purpose: answer “why?” question and rework our cosmology of why things happen (Spillers, 2007)

Anger
- 4 common sources
  - Violation of expectations
  - Loss of personal freedom
  - Helplessness
  - Fear
- A demand for change; passionate wish for things to be different (Remen, 1996/2006)
- Purpose: answer “why?” question and rework our cosmology of why things happen (Spillers, 2007)

Summary
- Grief is a normal response to any loss
- Messy, disorderly, and not neatly resolved (Kearney & Griffin, 2001)
- Find meaning and purpose in our circumstances, and to heal
- Ultimate resolution – wholeness

Wholeness
Introduction

“The greatest secret to life is how to survive struggle without succumbing to it...how to come out better than we were in the midst of it” (Chittister, 2003, p. 13).

Defining Wholeness

- Healthy, unhurt, entire; free of wound or injury; free of defect or impairment; free of disease or deformity (Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary)
  - Wholeness of psyche and soul
  - Part of us that remains complete, despite what happens to the physical, emotional, and cognitive bodies
  - Whole ≠ Perfect
  - Embracing brokenness as an integral part of life (Palmer, 2004)

Imperfection, Brokenness, & Wholeness

The Cultural Mold

- Competence, mastery, self-sufficiency (Remen, 2000)
- Fun, fast, & easy (Brown, 2010)
- Contempt for anything in us & others that has needs and is capable of suffering
- Judgment diminishes our wholeness far more than the disease or disability (Remen, 1996/2006)
Wholeness requires us to take back what we have rejected (Moore, 1992; Palmer, 2004; Remen, 1996; 2000; Young-Eisendrath, 1996)
- The beast that brought the object of distain is the angel that brings us the gifts of grace (Moore, 1992)
- The imperfections make us whole (Ann Reed, “Heroes”)
- “...Forget your perfect offering/there's a crack, a crack in everything/that's how the light gets in” (Leonard Cohen, “Anthem”)

Importance of Wholeness to Clients
- Clients may have deeper yearning for wholeness than professionals realize
- Examples
  - “I was ready to lose everything” (“Anna” transgender person)
  - “Stuttering made me feel like half of a person” (Al Rabinowitz, 2005)
  - “that's what really hurt...nobody saw me as whole...” (Dass & Gorman, 1996)
  - Parents in Kearney & Griffin (2001) study

We can live with any ‘how’ as long as we have a ‘why’ (Frankl, 1959)
- Realign values in direction that restores sense of worth
- 3 general ways to find meaning in circumstances/life (Frankl, 1959)
  - Creative Value – doing something significant; one’s calling in life
  - Aesthetic Value – appreciating life, people, nature, beauty; caring for another
  - Experiential Value – courage; weathering difficult times and “coming out better than we were in the midst of it” (Chittister)

The Role of Professionals
- Be aware of occupational hazard of focusing on deficits and fixing them to make client more socially acceptable
  - Jill Bolte Taylor (2006) – needed people to love her for who she might be not, not for who she was
- Point out growth that we see
- View circumstances/disability as a teacher
- Remen’s 3 Questions (2000)
  - What surprised me today?
  - What moved or touched me today?
  - What inspired me today?
Hope

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all

And sweetest in the gale is heard,
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land
And on the strangest sea,
Yet, never, in extremity
It asked a crumb of me.

Emily Dickinson

Defining Hope

Modern Usage
- Wishful thinking
- Optimism
- Giving up a wish vs. giving up hope
Distillation of definitions (Bowman, 2001; Brown, 2010; Chittister, 2003; Drench, et al., 2007; Dorsett, 2010; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Nuland, 2003; Phillips, 1981; Snyder, 1993)

- A vision supported by conviction that who we currently are and our current reality will co-evolve into something better, that will make sense to us.
- Must be grounded in reality, cognizant of present circumstances, rather than trying to escape from them (Brown, 2010; Chittister, 2003; Snyder, 1993)

A fundamental and integral part of life

- "Where there’s life, there’s hope" Super Grover
- We are intrinsically goal oriented, creating need for and opportunities for hope

Hope works on 2 levels (Dorsett, 2010; McCall, et al., 2000; Snyder, 1995)

- Trait/Dispositional/Generalized
  - Having a hopeful outlook on life
  - Snyder’s scale for measuring trait hope (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1995; Snyder, 2002).
- State/Situational/Particularized
  - Hope in a specific situation with clear goal, motivation, and pathway

The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991)

1. I can think of many ways to get out of a jam.
2. I energetically pursue my goals.
3. I feel tired most of the time.
4. There are lots of ways around any problem.
5. I am easily downed in an argument.
6. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.
7. I worry about my health
8. Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem.
9. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.
10. I’ve been pretty successful in life.
11. I usually find myself worrying about something.
12. I meet the goals that I set for myself.
Characteristics of Hope

- Snyder’s Goal Theory (Coduli & Schoen, 2014; Snyder, 1995; 2000)
  - Goal, Motivation (Will; Agency), & Methods (Way; Pathways)
  - Cognitive thinking drives the hope bus
- Goals (Coduli & Schoen, 2014)
  - Repair
  - Maintenance
  - Enhancement
  - Sure thing
  - Unattainable

Pathways (Coduli & Schoen, 2014)

- High hope people – clearly identified routes and can modify when necessary
- Low hope people – vague, less thought out routes; difficulty seeing alternatives

Agency (Coduli & Schoen, 2014)

- Thoughts and beliefs in one’s ability to start and persevere
- Self-talk

The Importance of Hope

- A necessary precursor to coping (McColl et al, 2000)
  - Dorsett (2010) -- essential factor that helped Ss cope early on and helped with long-term adjustment
  - Horton & Wallander (2001); Lloyd & Hastings (2009) -- negative r with amount of stress mothers felt
  - Kearney & Griffin (2001) -- allowed parents to see children’s disabilities in a larger context and find meaning & joy in life
  - Kearney & Griffin (2001)– pursue Tx that otherwise would be pointless

- Allows people to view loss, failure, and suffering as normal consequences of life
- Intricately related to meaning (Frankl, 1959)
- Taylor (2006) – needed people to treat her as though she would recover completely, no matter how long it may take
In what do people place their hopes?
- Bennett (2013) – “People’s decisions about their loved ones are often based strongly, powerfully, many times irrationally on the slimmest of hopes.”

- Dorsett (2010) – 3 foci of hope
  - Complete recovery
  - Cure
  - Satisfying quality of life

- Kearney & Griffin (2001) – parents lived in paradox
  - Recognizing seriousness of children’s conditions AND recognizing richness, beauty, and joy in life
  - Professional’s prognosis left no room for hope
  - Professionals often treated their hope as denial

The Role of Professionals

- Rethink our understanding of denial and acceptance
  - People can live with paradox
  - Confront & accept reality may ask people to give up hopes that they need to keep
  - Quality of life depends more on finding meaning rather than on complete acceptance of circumstances

We can help people from 3 different angles (Coduti & Schoen, 2014)

- Goals
  - Concrete, specific and meaningful to client not to us
  - Reimagine failure to reach goal
  - Approach goals rather than avoidance goals

- Pathways
  - Generate multiple ways to get somewhere
  - Break large goals down into small steps
  - Determine capabilities

- Agency
  - Importance to client
  - Recognize and challenge negative self-talk
  - Giving up a goal ≠ failure
Conclusion

Disability is a spoiler of dreams (Moses, 1989)
- The grieving path allows people a way to separate from the broken dream and heal
- Holding on and letting go both involve suffering
  - One is the suffering of stagnation
  - The other, of growth and wholeness
- Hope gives them the will and the way to weather this labyrinthine journey

References


Smart, J. (2009). Disability, society, and the individual. (2nd ed.) Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.


